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ABSTRACT

Designed as a forum for the exchange of ideas on significant issues in the humanities, this journal presents articles written by two-year-college-instructors in the humanistic disciplines. The 1988 annual issue includes the following: (1) "Internationalizing the College Curriculum: Incorporating a Spanish American Perspective in the Teaching of English and Spanish," by Carmen Maldonado Decker; (2) "Old Premises and Old Promises: Contemporary Critical Theory and Teaching at the Two-Year College," by Norman P. Will; (3) "Mimesis, Metaphor, and Morality: A Commentary on the Gardner-Gass Debate," by Diane S. Ganz; (4) "On the Road: Literary Traveling as an Addition to the Community College Humanities Curriculum," by Jeffrey M. Laing; (5) "Modern China: An Oxymoron," by Elnora Rigik, Eugene Slaski, and Margaret D. Williams; (6) "Learning to Be Human: Confucian Resources for Rethinking General Education," by Fran Conroy; (7) "Philosophy Comes Down to Earth: Critical Thinking and California's Community Colleges," by Joel Rudinow; (8) "Critical Thinking in the Guise of Philosophy: A Threat to the Humanities," a reply to Rudinow by Philip A. Pecorino; (9) "Painful, Necessary Reminders," a review of Cohen and Brawer's "The Collegiate Function of Community Colleges," by Melissa Sue Kort; (10) "Academic Freedom in a Community College: A Textbook Case of Censorship," by Jim Perry; (11) "The Community College Scholar/Teacher Revisited," by Myrna Goldenberg and F. David Kievitt; and (12) "Sigismondo Malatesta and His Tempio," by Nancy Womack. (AAC)

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HUMANITIES REVIEW

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1988 Number 9

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ESSAYS, ARTICLES, AND REVIEWS BY:

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Norman P. Will	Union College
Diane S. Ganz	Montgomery College
Jeffrey M. Laing	Santa Fe Community College
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The Community College Humanities Association is a nonprofit organization devoted to promoting the teaching and learning of the humanities in community and two-year colleges.

The Association's purposes are:

- To advance the cause of the humanities in community colleges through its own activities and in cooperation with other institutions and groups involved in higher education;
- To provide a regular forum for the exchange of ideas on significant issues in the humanities in higher education;
- To encourage and support the professional work of teachers in the humanities;
- To sponsor conferences and institutes to provide opportunities for faculty development;
- To promote the discussion of issues of concern to humanists and to disseminate information about the Association's activities through its publications.

The Association's publications include:

- **The Community College Humanities Review**, a journal for the discussion of substantive issues in the humanistic disciplines and in the humanities in higher education;
- **The Community College Humanist**, a tri-annual newsletter;
- **Proceedings of the Community College Humanities Association;**
- **Studies and reports** devoted to practical concerns of the teaching profession.

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The editors invite the submission of articles bearing upon issues in the humanities. Manuscripts and footnotes should be double-spaced throughout and submitted in triplicate, and should follow the guidelines published in the *Chicago Manual of Style*. Preference will be given to submissions postmarked before May 15 and demonstrating familiarity with current ideas and the scholarly literature on a given subject. Procedures for reviewing manuscripts provide for the anonymity of the author and the confidentiality of editors' and readers' reports. Editorial policy does not provide for informing authors of evaluations or suggestions for improving rejected manuscripts. Authors should include a self-addressed, stamped envelope if return of the manuscript is desired and should provide a fifty-word biographical statement indicating positions held and publications. Statements of fact and opinion appearing in the *Review* are made on the responsibility of the authors alone and do not imply endorsement by the Community College Humanities Association or the editors.

CCHA wishes to acknowledge the generous support of the Mellon Foundation.

Remarks from the Editor

Longtime readers of the *Review* will notice that this issue represents a considerable and perhaps significant departure from previous editorial practice. Though the articles in previous issues were of course relevant to the community college scene, few of them were in fact written by community college humanists. The editor and some members of the CCHA have felt the need to change this, and so for this issue all contributions have been selected from manuscripts submitted by persons who teach at two-year colleges. To the extent that this proves agreeable to members of the CCHA, this practice will continue in the future.

The collection of articles which has been the result of this editorial initiative might be open to several criticisms. For one thing, this issue has considerably less focus than previous numbers and is less heavily slanted towards articles that deal exclusively with pedagogical concerns. As eclectic as the contents may be, it nonetheless seems to me that this collection of material accurately reflects the diversity of interests characteristic of community and junior college faculty. The contributors have dealt with political issues that bear upon the work of community college faculty, with the theoretical underpinnings of classroom practice, with educational travel, and with critical issues discussed without any reference to the classroom whatsoever. This issue also contains the first specimen of scholarship from a community college teacher that has appeared in the journal's ten-year history.

A second objection to the journal as it stands might be that most of the articles come from within the disciplines of English and Philosophy. I wish that were not the case, and I would urge, if not beg, historians, teachers of art and music, and teachers of foreign languages and literatures, religion, and interdisciplinary humanities courses to send their work to the *Review*.

I would also ask readers who have second thoughts about these matters and any other issues raised by this edition of the journal to send them to the editor. All letters will be answered promptly and printed in the *Humanist* if appropriate. All new submissions will be read immediately upon receipt, and authors will be quickly informed of the disposition of their work.

—W.R.A.

CCHR COMMUNITY COLLEGE HUMANITIES REVIEW

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Internationalizing the College Curriculum: Incorporating a Spanish American Perspective in the Teaching of English and Spanish

Carmen Maldonado Decker

For the last few months, Stanford University faculty have been debating a proposal to make their freshman Western culture program better reflect the achievements of women, minorities, and Third World cultures. A task force was appointed to consider the possibility of changing the title of the three-term requirement in Western culture to "Culture, Ideas, and Values." The revised program would include the study of at least one non-European culture and, as supporters of the proposal contend, would redefine the meaning of the term Western civilization. Joe Platt, professor of history at California State University, Fullerton, strongly supports the proposed change at Stanford. In a recent interview for the *Orange County Register*, he indicated that "the term Western civilization sounds too ethnocentric, because when people talk about it, they don't mean the Incas or Mayas, who are the original creators in this hemisphere." He agrees with other educators that "America is becoming more Third World and we should broaden our curriculum to include this pluralism."[1]

The controversy over the internationalization of the humanities curriculum at Stanford has attracted national attention. Many regard the proposed change as a direct contradiction to the recommendations made by William Bennett.[2] In "To Reclaim a Legacy," Bennett indicated that "the core of the American college curriculum, its heart and soul, should be the civilization of the West." He added that "it is simply not possible for students to understand their society without studying its intellectual legacy. If the past is hidden from them, they will become aliens in their own culture, strangers in their own land."

Carmen Maldonado Decker *received her Ph.D. in comparative literature from the University of California. She teaches English and Spanish at Cypress College and served as one of the co-directors, along with Julio Ortega, of the 1987 NEH-funded summer institute on Contemporary Spanish American Literature sponsored by CCHA.*

Educators today do not question this basic assumption; however, they do question the narrow interpretation of the term "civilization of the West" and are attempting to redefine it in order to better reflect the overall cultural heritage of the Western Hemisphere.

The debate over the internationalization of the college curriculum has been particularly heated in academic circles in California because the state has been the major gateway for Asian and Latin American immigration in the second half of this century. In a recent interview published in *The New Perspectives Quarterly*, California Assembly member Tom Hayden remarked that some agreement should be reached regarding the content of a core curriculum, but he also indicated that "there are numerous legitimate issues around the boundaries of a curriculum." He explained that, "for example, in California, the cultures of Mexico and the Pacific are very important. To leave out Carlos Fuentes or Gabriel Garcia Marquez would be a tragedy."[3]

Educators and legislators throughout the nation have attempted to respond to various calls for reform in the undergraduate curriculum through the proposed development of a general education core curriculum and through appeals to colleagues to consider the social, economic, and educational necessity for the internationalization of the curriculum. In 1985, the Association of American Colleges issued a report entitled "Integrity in the College Curriculum," which included the following recommendation:

> How should a college go about opening the eyes and minds of its students to the shrinking world in which they live and to the aspirations of women and of the ethnic minorities who are redefining American social and political reality? There are opportunities in many solidly entrenched disciplines of the curriculum to widen access to the diversity of American and world cultures. The study of foreign language and literature can be enriched by exploring the culture of which it is an artifact.[4]

Because California has been oriented historically, geographically, economically, and culturally to Asia and Latin America, there is a pressing need to modify the assumption among politicians, academicians, and students that the basic unit of social life is the discrete nation, society, or culture. It is becoming increasingly evident that the curriculum in our colleges and universities should be revised to incorporate a broader perspective on the pluralism of today's society. Neil Smelser, professor of sociology at Berkeley, believes that "the twin phenomena of internationalization and interdependency are rendering this fundamental premise questionable and demand novel ways of thinking, analyzing, and understanding."[5] In California, in particular, a combination of migration and differential birth rates among ethnic groups has resulted in trends that have made California truly multicultural and multilin-

gual. These trends are expected to accelerate during the coming decades to the point that those now designated as minorities will will constitute a majority at the turn of the century. It is thus more than time that our curriculum reflect and explain the nation's cultural heterogeneity through a comparative, multicultural, or global approach.

The initiative for promoting the internationalization of the curriculum rightly belongs to the faculty of the community colleges. A 1985 survey conducted by the American Council on Education revealed that most humanities courses (87 percent) are taken by students during the first two years of their college education, placing a particular responsibility on the community colleges to strengthen and examine the content of their general education curriculum. It is disconcerting to discover that only 47 percent of American colleges and universities require a foreign language for graduation, as compared with 89 percent in 1966. This trend is particularly alarming because one of the inherent values in the study of a foreign language is that students learn to understand and respect cultural traditions and values other than their own.

In 1987, the UCLA student body association published a report entitled *A Need for Reform: A Student Perspective on UCLA Undergraduate Education,* which outlined several areas where the students felt that their undergraduate education had been neglected and made specific recommendations for improvement. In the area of foreign languages they stated:

> students should know how to write, read, and converse in at least one language other than English before leaving the university. It is a tragedy that while America is a leader in so many areas, we are perhaps one of the most backward countries with respect to educating ourselves about the world beyond the United States of America. Our state is rapidly changing and diversifying in ethnicity, culture, and language. It is time to stop neglecting these changes.[8]

With this need for cultural reform in mind, and with languages and literature as the logical fields for internationalizing the college curriculum, the Community College Humanities Association sponsored a four-week summer institute on contemporary Spanish American literature at Columbia University in New York in 1987. The institute, funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, involved forty faculty participants representing various disciplines from two-year and four-year colleges and universities from all over the nation. The institute was designed to provide an intellectual environment that would expose faculty to the most recent developments in Spanish American literature. It was promoted in order to attract faculty trained in American or European literature to consider broadening their curriculum by incorporating a component of Spanish American literature into their courses.

It was also intended to appeal to faculty teaching in Spanish departments who has been trained in Spanish Peninsular or Golden Age literature and who wanted an opportunity to update their knowledge of more recent literary works by contemporary Spanish American writers. The institute was also planned to encourage the development of innovative pedagogical applications to the teaching of contemporary Spanish American literature in various disciplines.

While the institute focused primarily on major works of fiction by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Carlos Fuentes, Alejo Carpentier, and Jose Maria Arguedas, much time was also devoted to discussing the recent fiction of Spanish American women writers as well as Puerto Rican and Chicano authors. The specific works chosen to study, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, *The Death of Artemio Cruz*, *Deep Rivers*, and *War of Time*, were selected not only for their literary merit but also because they reflect issues in Spanish American history, culture, politics, and ethnological self-definition that are so important to an adequate understanding of Latin America. Institute lecturers provided not only a literary approach to these works, they also offered a historical and socio-cultural analysis of the environment within which each author developed his or her own view of reality. This approach was important because college faculty interested in internationalizing the curriculum will be able to use a component of Spanish American literature in their courses as a valid vehicle for exploring the cultural ideas and historical epochs that have influenced the formation of Latin American society, both within and beyond the political boundaries of the United States. Because Spanish American culture is so much a product of the synthesizing and blending of Spanish, Indian, and African cultures, writers from these varied ethnic backgrounds can offer students a better understanding of the contributions that each cultural group has made to the social and historical development of Latin America, which, in turn, helps students realize how their view of reality has been shaped and molded by the cultural norms of their own society.

Deep Rivers, by Peruvian author Jose Maria Arguedas, was the first major work studied during our summer program. Professor Jose Maria Rabasa of the University of Texas (Austin) led the discussion of this lyrical novel. *Deep Rivers* is a powerful study of the problems of ethnicity, socialization, and communication in the pluralistic culture of Peru. Discussion of this novel noted the clash of the Indian and *mestizo* societies of Peru and lent itself to a critical approach that made use of the interaction between literature and anthropology. The musical and poetic Indian world of the *Quechua* Indian, as depicted by Arguedas, is still permeated by a magical and pagan view of reality. This pristine view is contrasted with the conflicting world of the Peruvian-

mestizo, whose values and religion have been greatly influenced by European culture. The presence of these two perspectives in the novel highlights one of the recurring themes in Spanish American literature: the cultural syncretism that has occurred in Latin America through the historical resistance of aboriginal America to the strong forces of colonization by the Europeans.

Professor Ricardo Gutierrez-Mouat of Emory University lectured on the formal and cultural aspects of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, by Colombian novelist Gabriel Garcia Marquez. The extensive critical bibliography on the Nobel laureate made it possible to present a variety of formal approaches to the novel's multiple narrative techniques, manipulation of time, and use of magic realism. Discussion focused on the novel's peculiar system of interchange, on one level as cultural discourse and on the other as the product of oral traditions. The prevalent use of various levels of myth in this novel permitted demonstrations of the use of new critical tools such as semiology, textual decodification, and systems of sign correlations.

Professor Roberto Gonzalez-Echevarria of Yale University shared with participants his wealth of knowledge regarding both the historical and cultural approaches to *War of Time*, by Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier. This dual approach facilitated the demonstration of another area of critical interaction: the literary text and the use of Spanish American history. It was possible to relate Alejo Carpentier's elaboration of a baroque literature to that of Latin American history in search of its identity through a series of European influences. Participants had an opportunity to examine the impact of the French Revolution on the history of the Caribbean and the influence of French philosophy in Carpentier's depiction of time.

Carlos Fuentes' *The Death of Artemio Cruz* was the focus of the final week of study. Professor Saul Sosnowski of the University of Maryland lectured on Fuentes' complex exploration of modern Mexican history and politics. This seminal work is seen as marking the end of the historical narrative on the Mexican revolution and beginning a new era of political revision. In this novel, Fuentes uses a complex interweaving of modernist narrative techniques to convey the fractured reality of a failed revolution. The central character in the novel represents the failed idea of an ideological revolution stopped short by the socio-economic realities of individual and collective corruption. Through the main character, Fuentes traces the development of modern Mexican history and analyzes the political realities of greed, violence, and corruption present in today's Latin America.

The summer institute gave the participants an opportunity to meet other specialists in the field and to share teaching methodologies and discuss common

educational concerns with other colleagues. Many of them have indicated that the opportunity for dialogue with fellow participants and the lecturers was one of the most valuable aspects of the institute. For many, the research and library facilities at Columbia University and the intellectual and cultural environment of New York City offered a much-needed opportunity for professional development and renewal. However, the single most important result of the institute has been the revision of the participants' college curricula. Judging from the reports submitted last fall and early this spring, most institute participants have been successful in revising their curricula to include an international perspective. Many have developed their own courses, such as comparative courses on Canadian, American, and Latin American Indian mythology (Portland Community College), interdisciplinary courses on Mexican literature and Mexican murals (St. Joseph's College in California), the internationalization of drama courses (University of South Carolina), and even the internationalization of English composition (Santa Barbara City College). Professor Hilbrink's syllabus for an English composition course includes readings from Garcia Marquez, Jorge Luis Borges, Gabriela Mistral, and Manuel Puig.

Because the population of the United States is being composed in ever-increasing numbers of people whose first language is Spanish, and since more countries today speak Spanish than ever in history spoke one language, the incorporation of a component of Spanish American literature and culture in college courses would appear to be a valid approach to internationalizing the curriculum and exposing students to the ideas and values of an increasingly important region in our world.

Notes

[1] Joe Platt, "Curriculum Changes Considered", *Orange County Register*, April 7, 1988.

[2] William J. Bennett, "To Reclaim a Legacy," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, November 28, 1984, pp. 16-21.

[3] Tom Hayden, "Our Finest Moment," *New Perspectives Quarterly*, Winter 1988.

[4] Association of American Colleges, "Integrity in the College Curriculum" (1985; reprinted from the *Chronicle of Higher Education*).

[5] Neil J. Smelser, *Lower Division Education in the University of California* (Berkeley: University of California, 1986), p. 30.

[6] UCLA Student Body, *A Need for Reform: A Student Perspective on UCLA Undergraduate Education* (Los Angeles, May 1985), p. 9.

Old Premises and Old Promises: Contemporary Critical Theory and Teaching at the Two-Year College

Norman P. Will

The president of my college, Union County College in New Jersey, has recently found it useful to describe my background to various audiences inside and outside the college. As he often explains, I hold a Ph.D. in literature from Rutgers University. I was for four years chairman of the largest department at the college, the English/Fine Arts/Modern Languages Department. I have done post-doctoral study at Princeton University and at the School of Criticism and Theory at Dartmouth. I am one of the designers and founding faculty members of our honors program. The president points all this out as a contrast to what I am now doing for a living, implementing a grant that has, among other things, created a high school for minority students on our main campus. His implication is that if I have been willing to almost completely abandon the profession I have been trained for, this controversial grant project must be crucially important, despite the criticism and even incredulity it often generates among college and community constituencies.

What strikes me most about the president's use of me as a public relations point is his assumption, never questioned by any audience I have heard him address, that my involvement with secondary education and with minority issues in education is somehow at variance with my training. At first glance, I suppose he appears right, though some elements of that training were apparently subversive enough not only to allow me to experience a continuity in my career, but even to see my current work as an enactment of much of the so-called literary theory that I have studied in recent years, theory often deemed irrelevant to teaching and working at a two-year college. But my experience and my training lead me to view the two-year college as a unique opportunity to combine theory and practice, as a place where theory and practice can interpenetrate and become mutually validating.

Norman P. Will *is Senior Professor of English at Union County College in Cranford, New Jersey.*

What other institution in American education would pay me to spend a summer studying with J. Hillis Miller, Geoffrey Hartman, and Elaine Showalter, knowing that I would soon be struggling with such practical concerns as school buses and physical education classes for fifteen-year-old potential dropouts?

I recall that when I arrived in 1977 at what was then a private two-year school called Union College, with my doctorate in hand and with eight years of experience teaching at a high school and at four-year colleges and universities, I was shocked by the students in my classrooms. Some were older than I was. Many seemed emotionally fragile, some clearly disturbed. Some were working full-time while trying to squeeze in as many as fifteen credits per semester. Even the supposedly "traditional" students, the eighteen- and nineteen-year-olds, did not match my expectations. Some were at school only to placate their parents. Many had weaker skills than I had encountered in my high school teaching experience. Yet there we all were, together in one room, working through the same syllabus I had used most recently as a teaching assistant at Rutgers University, reading selections from the same canonized anthologies. Yet the only similarity between the classes at Rutgers and at Union was racial: almost all students in my classes were white.

Why were they there, I had to ask myself. What did they want out of Union College? Why especially were they making such demands on their time, and why were some continuing in an educational system that had told them for so long that they were inadequate, that they were failures? What was the promise the college was holding out, and how did my course contribute to its realization? Answers did not come quickly.

In 1982 Union College became Union County College (UCC), a fully public comprehensive community college. This change in status accelerated a shift in the ethnic make-up of the student body as the college expanded, adding campuses and seeking more deliberately to serve the black and Hispanic population of its county. UCC also now offered more career and technical education, and faculty grappled with the question of how much or how little humanities education should be included in such curricula.

My own questions intensified. What specifically do we claim are the benefits of education in the humanities, especially in writing and literature? What is literature? Why do we teach it? Why do we (or did we) require it in so-called liberal programs of study? What can it and can it not do for students? Allan Bloom laments that students no longer "hope that there are great wise men in other places and times who can reveal the truth about life."[1] Is that what

literature is—a repository of unchanging wisdom articulated by men? Secretary of Education William Bennett believes we have lost a cultural legacy and must reclaim it by struggling against the intrusions of those he recently called "trendy lightweights."[2] Can great books constitute this legacy? Whose legacy was it and is it? Does this legacy belong in the same way to a nineteen-year-old white male from the suburbs as to a nineteen-year-old black male from the city? To a nineteen-year-old female, black or white? To a forty-five-year-old female returning to education? To Hispanic and Haitian students? To Asian and Nigerian and Egyptian and Palestinian and Iranian students? All of these students and others are in my classes together. What is the goal of a literature or composition course for these or any students? To pass on a legacy derived largely from Great Britain? To teach standard American English? Standard for which Americans? Is my composition class a microwave melting pot, or a cultural filtration system? Does it provide quick access to a job, or is it a culturally empowered barrier to success in American society? Do we require this course in American language to help each student use language more effectively for his or her own purposes or to promulgate dominant cultural values? Such questions are more urgent at, and to some extent grow out of, the two-year college, with its assumptions that higher education is for everyone. Does America really believe that? Education of what kind, or in what sense?

I continue to ask these questions, which grow out of my daily experience at a two-year college, where I work with fifteen-year-old black and Hispanic high school freshmen and with college honors students from eighteen to seventy years of age. These are also the kinds of questions that grow out of contemporary literary theory, and it is that conjunction which allows me to see my current projects at the college as continuous with and informed by my professional training and theoretical interests. It is that conjunction also which allows me to see that the two-year college can be the vanguard of American education if we enact the insights of critical theory and if we refuse to hold out old promises based on old premises about what education can and should do for people.

Many, perhaps most, of us teaching literature today were trained in the principles and methods of New Criticism during our graduate study. And most of us have since found that New Critical approaches are not adequate to the classrooms in which we teach. New Criticism, initiated by the modernist literary projects of T. S. Eliot and translated into pedagogical method by Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren (among others) in the thirties and forties, emulated the supposed objective approach of the sciences. It viewed the literary work as an isolated artifact to be examined as one might examine a vase

of unknown origin. It assumed, among other things, that such an object had a universal value independent of its origin or the situation of its contemporary reception. Moreover, it assumed that the alleged universality and timeless qualities of such objects were connected with universals of human nature and that study of literary artifacts could not only tell us about that nature but could contribute to its highest realization. But I have found, as have many of my honest colleagues, that students who arrive at college without the faith that literature is valuable in and of itself seem unresponsive to discussions of the text as an isolated icon of finely balanced ambiguities and internal relations. And surely we all know, even without resorting to melodramatic historical examples, some less than fully realized human types who know and teach and profess to love literature. Surely all of us teaching literature at two-year colleges, and probably most of our colleagues at four-year colleges and universities, have questioned and altered our critical stance, with more and less deliberate thought, understanding, and willingness, in response to the demands of our newly pluralistic classroom audience. Perhaps, too, we have questioned our implicit promises about the humanizing effects of literary study.

I have found that post-structuralist theory speaks clearly to the shifts I have made in response to very pragmatic realities in my professional and philosophical life. In the sixties, just as structuralism was becoming popular in America, Jacques Derrida's critique of structuralism arrived. His essay "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" argued that behind the work of structuralists like Ferdinand de Saussure and Claude Levi-Strauss is the notion of an original signified. Derrida denies this original as the source of meaning, pointing instead to a chain of signifiers as productive of meaning. There can be no pure signified, only the chain of signifiers. To assert otherwise is to posit a "transcendental signified." If we believe we have located such a thing, we must deconstruct our notion to discover the contradiction in our discourse. Always, we must resist the notion of a transcendental signified. Such resistance is a key concept in Derrida's radical and political system. The concept of something behind words and free from words has, he thinks, captured Western philosophy; he calls this concept "logocentrism," and he opposes to it with "*differance*," with an "a," a non-word coined to combine the spatial difference between words and the temporal deferral of meaning he sees as essential to meaning in language. Meaning is never present as a signified but is deferred to next in the chain of signifiers. *Differance* must be a non-word to decrease the risk that it will itself be taken as the transcendental signified. To prevent us from seizing on *differance* in this way, Derrida constantly moves to new terms—"non-synonymic" terms,

as he calls them. He wants terms unstable to avoid hierarchies of meaning implying privileged things outside the system. Such privileging would stultify thought and allow tyrannical forms to hold sway—patriarchy or Eurocentrism, for example.[3]

The deconstructive act is applied to texts which ought to make clear that the connection between signifier and signified is arbitrary and that meaning is endlessly deferred, but which imply otherwise. Literary works are such texts most fully because, while our cultural expectations would like to locate a fixed meaning embodying some glimpse or promise of an unchanging truth, the tropological nature of literary language creates *differance* as an endless movement, a movement allowing for play, for playing with meaning. Play in Derrida means refusing the notion of the transcendental signified in language; it means opening up meaning to the play of *differance*. Meaning is not somewhere, fixed, closed, waiting for language to capture it. We must resist the metaphysical tendencies of our language. We cannot succeed, but we must maintain the tension of opposition to prevent any power group from claiming to know the essential nature of the signified. Thus Derrida's political significance. Keep disrupting the system by play. Literature is the disruption of metaphysical systems by play. Politically, power dictates the signified of "good" and oppresses all else, but literature resists this tyranny of meaning, and so it is (and because it is) on the margin always, decentering meaning and power.

Derrida might seem a long way from the classrooms most of us teach in, but his thought bears directly on what we ought to be doing. Deconstruction raises the issues of determinate vs. indeterminate meaning and of authority in relation to meaning, and those questions bear directly on any interpretive activity. What are we doing when we interpret? Must we accept utterly diffused meaning? Must students be permitted to read texts in idiosyncratic ways? Should we, or can we, provide the "correct reading"? Hazard Adams, at an NEH/CCHA summer institute, offered a useful distinction between metaphysical and mediational interpretation. We cannot simply declare the meaning of a text as if that meaning is a metaphysical reality revealed to English teachers in graduate school; that would be bad pedagogy and bad philosophy. We must, instead, provide familiarizing mediation. We must offer what J. Hillis Miller calls "a method of reading in action."[4] We must show by our methodology not the uncertainty but the open-endedness of interpretation. The interpretive activities in our classroom generate discourse. We must convey that such discourse is never shut off, that that is why we continue to study the same texts repeatedly, why each age, each generation, each section of English composition or of a literature survey, must engage in the

ongoing conversation and creation of meaning. Especially in two-year colleges, where our commuting students and our preoccupied part-time students are missing the sense of an intellectual community so important to the college experience, we must engage them in the "cultural conversation," because if we do not, they may never understand the relations between language and power, between controlling meaning and controlling one's life. They may never understand the crucial role of language in culture and politics. Or they may understand it all too well and see education in America as the conservator of white European cultural power. By engaging them in mediational interpretation, we encourage them to resist imposed meanings and to keep their minds and themselves free by resisting the imposing structures of language.

We must empower our students by putting into action in our classes a critical method of discerning fictions, and their overt and covert structures and oppressions. Our approaches to the fictions of literature must not promise fixed verities; rather, we must engage with our students in what William James called the processes of "verification,"[5] of making truth by our actions and our sayings. Literature offers us not the discovered unchanging truths of nature or culture, but a tentative and selective shaping in language which makes certain claims to truth and may imply others left unexamined by the text itself. The study of literature does not offer entrance into the mainstream culture as if it were a country club. Such promises about the benefits of liberal education are false and dangerous. Rather, critical reading and writing and discussion in response to literature offer the interpretive skills of judging truth claims and a critical skepticism about the oppressions and exclusions inherent in any fiction. Such skepticism must especially be directed at the humanly created hierarchies we read as reality and use as a rationale for elitism and cultural dominance. Finally, we can empower our students by teaching them a language game, call it literary criticism, by acknowledging that other language games have other rules and that no single game can be privileged absolutely in its claims to truth. By empowerment, I mean allowing students to keep as full a range of voices as possible with the understanding that manipulation and control of those voices will constitute whatever power is available to them. I mean teaching students to remain at least resistant to the pressures of the dominant cultural fictions that will try to define and contain them, especially those fictions which hold out the promise of entry into the country club of mainstream culture at the price of assimilation and loss of critical perspective. These empowerments are the goals of a deconstructive approach to texts.

There is a constructive side to deconstruction, and I see it growing out of the work of American philosopher Richard Rorty. In *Philosophy and the Mirror*

of Nature, Rorty deconstructs analytic philosophy, the tradition he calls "systematic" philosophy and traces through Locke, Descartes, Kant, Russell, and Husserl. As does Derrida, Rorty finds these philosophical projects trapped in an epistemology based on theories of representation, theories that locate truth in external reality, which the supposed "mirror of the mind" must accurately reflect for contemplation by the mind's alleged "inner eye." He contrasts the efforts of these systematic philosophers to decide once and for all the knowability of things and the certainty of knowledge with what he calls the "edifying" philosophies of Dewey, Wittgenstein, and Heidegger. Freed from notions of representation of absolute truth, these philosophers engage not in judgments about the legitimacy of knowledge but in "abnormal discourse," discourse that attempts to describe a sense of questioning, a sense that current "normal" descriptions of reality are incommensurable with our experience of it. Truth in edifying philosophy is not foundational, not based on some bedrock certainty of the accurate internal representation of external reality. Rather, the constant process of stretching beyond the limits of normal discourse creates truth, according to Rorty, creates, that is, justified belief, belief justified by the norms of the discourse that created it, which must in turn be challenged and gotten past by abnormal discourse. Rorty calls the truth-making process a cultural conversation, and argues that "to see keeping a conversation going as a sufficient aim of philosophy, to see wisdom as consisting in the ability to sustain a conversation, is to see human beings as generators of new descriptions rather than beings one hopes to be able to describe accurately."[6] Language in this view of truth-making becomes not a barrier to accurate description but the instrument and mark of our creative ordering. And people in this view become not objects but agents struggling to maintain their freedom.

The teaching implications of social contructionist theories of knowledge such as Rorty's are immediate and pragmatic. As Ken Bruffee explains in an excellent essay in *College English*, "Placing language at the center of our understanding of knowledge and of the authority of knowledge, [social constructionist thought] thereby places reading and writing unequivocally where it belongs, at the center of the liberal arts curriculum and the whole educational process."[7] So deconstruction is not, in my view, the nihilistic denier of values and judgment it is sometimes accused of being. On the contrary, it locates the responsibility for value, meaning, and judgment where it belongs, in our human activities of shaping the world for our comprehension. And it makes our responsibility as well the use and abuse of power to maintain privileged positions through oppression of others by created truth. It does not allow us to pass the buck to a higher or more abstract authority. We are what we make

ourselves, and others are only what we make of them if we become enslaved to our own meanings, or to those of the more powerful among us. Disruption by play, resistance, abnormal discourse—these are the skills we must teach and must keep alive in our disciplines, ourselves, and our students.

Assuming that I have been deconstructed and then socially constructed all over again, what should be the outcomes of any composition or literature course I teach? Questioning universal knowledge, questioning culture as a static entity to be revered for its humanizing and liberating effects undermines much traditional subject matter and teaching method. Our pluralistic student audience has already made us change. (Or, if we cling to supposed traditional and elitist verities about who should be educated and why, it has made us despair, deservedly; and those who have so despaired have indeed committed the unforgivable sin.) Current theory can show us the wisdom and honesty of such change. "Marginal voices" and excluded or silenced voices can help us see where our central cultural values are, can keep us aware that they are arbitrary and can force us to consider at whose expense such values are maintained. If knowledge is, as Rorty says, socially justified rather than an accurate representation of what is out there in the world or beyond, then power is the major issue—who has the power and what do they claim is true and good? Once again, the marginal decentering forces are crucial to keep power from freezing knowledge in static modes to maintain its own dominance. Literature and the other arts and, potentially, everyone's writing can constitute counter-discourse, the necessary deconstruction of cultural dominance, the deferral of meaning that keeps the conversation going and the culture growing. Without these forces, knowledge solidifies into oppression. The danger lies not in moral relativism or cultural pluralism; the danger is failing to realize the non-foundational nature of knowledge. If we admit that knowledge is of our communal making, we can empower ourselves and our students in the educational enterprise.

But what do I really want my courses to accomplish? At the end of my course in anything, I want students to be aware of the power of fictions, the power of the imagination to create meanings and to impose those meanings on our perception of the world. I want them to be aware that meanings created by others dominate their lives, and that they must resist these acquired meanings and strive to create their own, or someone else, the culture at large, will continue to do so for them. I want to shake their faith that anything written is true with a capital "T" and that literary writers have a special gift for revealing Truth. I want them instead to engage in a dialogue with the texts and about the texts, to see that the texts we experience are in dialogue with one another, and to contribute meaningful texts of their own to that dialogue. I

especially want them to question the pervasive inherited dichotomies in our thinking, the easy either/or's we use to organize our thinking, but which we then read as hierarchies, mistake for reality, and use to justify and defend our embattled selves.

When I articulate these goals, I am immediately confronted by the paradox of *teaching* students to question acquired ideas, traditional structurings of thought. In such a context, what is the source and what are the limits of my authority? Where are the boundaries of my responsibility as a teacher, and how do they relate to the role as a learner that my own course goals impose on me? How can I simultaneously teach with authority and acknowledge my own biases—biases of culture, of gender, of specialized training? How can I resist the biases that shape me as an interpreter of texts? Can I be one of the forces my students must resist and question, and simultaneously the judge of their performance?

Some specific critical projects informed by contemporary theory, especially feminist projects, have shaken me out of my traditional approaches sufficiently, sometimes by making clear the tenuousness of my presumed authority, to help me get out on the edge where my precarious balancing act can become a performance, not just a methodology but a demonstration of method in action for my students.

Recent movements in critical theory are rich with pedagogical implications. What is common to them all is a questioning of traditional bases of authority, something many of our non-traditional students have been doing for some time. Each of these critical theories leads to a questioning of the traditional canon, for example, a process many of us have been through in an effort to engage students who every day live the exclusions recent theories point out, whether those students are fifteen-year-old black high schoolers at a predominantly white college, women who have been told that education is important for their brothers but not for them, or Third World students for whom cultural imperialism is far more concrete than theoretical. Interpretive authority is also questioned in each critical theory, and again many of our students have forced us to do the same as we try to explain to them and to ourselves why we value one text or reading over another. But perhaps most significantly, recent theory validates our sense that nothing in education is more important than our efforts to give students power over their own language, to free them from the prison of inarticulateness and the tyranny of meanings imposed on their lives by those in control of the media and of cultural institutions, including colleges. Our teaching practice will no doubt continue to be shaped more by necessity than by theory, but theory can help

bring into fuller and more careful articulation the things that are out there already, at the center of our professional lives in the two-year college.

Notes

[1] Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), p. 34.

[2] "Bennett: Colleges' 'Trendy Lightweights' Replace Classics with Nonsense," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 10, 1988, p. A19.

[3] For useful overviews of Derridean deconstruction, see Harold Bloom *et al.*, *Deconstruction and Criticism* (New York: Continuum, 1984); Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1982); and Vincent B. Leitch, *Deconstructive Criticism: An Advanced Introduction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

[4] J. Hillis Miller, "The Joy of Teaching," *MLA Newsletter*, vol. 18, no. 2 (Summer 1986), p. 2.

[5] William James, *Pragmatism* (New York: New American Library, 1955), p. 133.

[6] Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 378.

[7] Kenneth A. Bruffee, "Social Construction, Language, and the Authority of Knowledge: A Bibliographical Essay," *College English*, vol. 48 (1986), p. 778.

Mimesis, Metaphor, and Morality: A Commentary on the Gardner–Gass Debate

Diane S. Ganz

In "The Reason for Stories," an essay in the June 1988 issue of *Harper's* magazine, novelist Robert Stone gives a persuasive defense of what has come to be called "moral fiction." Stone writes his defense in response to an earlier *Harper's* essay by novelist and critic William Gass, "Goodness Knows Nothing of Beauty," in which Gass reiterates the postmodernist position that the world of art and the world of moral action have nothing to say to each other. Readers of this Stone–Gass dialogue might perhaps hear echoes of an earlier chapter in this age-old controversy between art and morality, the celebrated Gardner–Gass debates that were carried on in print and across college campuses in the late seventies, following the publication in 1978 of Gardner's critical manifesto, *On Moral Fiction*. Something of a cross between a Chautauqua series and a literary dogfight, the Gardner–Gass debates commanded the attention of the American reading public for over a year. People enjoyed the spectacle of two literary lions having at one another, an enjoyment heightened by the fact that, although they were good friends, the two writers were dramatically different in appearance, point of view, and intellectual style. Gass, the postmodernist, was cool, ironic, and patrician; Gardner, the traditionalist, was earnest, passionate, and disheveled.

Besides being entertaining, however, the debates managed to focus on serious literary issues that are seldom given popular scrutiny, questions about the relationship of fiction to life, about the moral role of the imagination in "making people good by choice," as Tolstoy put it, and the potential of art to answer to the human need for life-affirming myths. A decade later, now that our fascination with their showmanship has faded, it is worth returning to the Gardner–Gass debates. No longer so distracted by Gass's swordplay and Gardner's gunfighting, we can re-examine their arguments with more critical

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care than the original occasion afforded, and by consulting their critical works, Gardner's *On Moral Fiction* and *The Art of Fiction* and Gass's *Fiction and the Figures of Life* and *The World Within the Word*, we can extend the boundaries of what was originally a spoken dialogue to include a conversation between texts.

To begin, it will be useful to reassess *On Moral Fiction*, since it was through that work that Gardner became the spokesman for moral fiction. Rather than focus only on Gardner's denunciations of what he considered the shoddy and irresponsible condition of American letters, however, I will concentrate on an exposition of Gardner's own aesthetic, which, although it is crucial to a full appreciation of what Gardner means by moral fiction, was largely neglected by his earlier critics. In my view, it is Gardner's dialogical aesthetic, his notion of morality as a *process* inherent in the fictional process, that represents his most enduring contribution to the discussion about morality and art.

In reopening the dialogue between Gardner and Gass, I will focus on the issue of mimesis. Gardner's claim is that literature is fundamentally mimetic—that is, it has something important to tell us about the world beyond the page. Gass claims that literature is fundamentally metaphoric—that is, its truth is figurative and has reference only within the language world of the text. To understand Gass's refusal of relevance, it will be necessary to see his argument in the context of language theory, especially the recent discussions of the contextual nature of metaphor.

In the final section of the essay, I will propose that this opposition between metaphor and mimesis is essentially a false dilemma and that it can be resolved by the kind of hermeneutical understanding of language proposed by Paul Ricoeur—not that either Gass or Gardner would have accepted such a resolution, of course. Though they were good friends, these two writers had very different fundamental assumptions about the nature of literature, and even had John Gardner lived and the Gardner–Gass debate continued, it is doubtful whether they would have ever reached agreement.

Gardner's Moral Aesthetic

In *On Moral Fiction*, published four years before his death in 1982, Gardner spoke out on behalf of the traditional view that true art is moral and should

provide a "benevolent vision of the possible which can inspire and incite human beings toward virtue."[1] Literature, Gardner insisted, is art in service of the true, the good, and the beautiful, eternal verities that are seldom mentioned in the vernacular of contemporary criticism. What caused furious reactions to the book, however, was not Gardner's Platonism, but his preaching, especially his condemnation of fellow writers as being "short on significant belief and short on moral fiber."[2] Fiction writers of the seventies, complained Gardner, were not "so much a group of post-modernists as a gang of absurdists and jubilant nihilists."[3] Furthermore, Gardner was most unfriendly in his characterizations of particular writers. Norman Mailer, "whether from laziness or from preacherly arrogance settles ... for easy satire."[4] Joseph Heller "refuses to take any bold, potentially embarrassing moral stand."[5] Kurt Vonnegut "sighs, grins, and sidles away,"[6] and although Saul Bellow has a "theory of faith and responsible love," he is self-indulgent, "allows himself ... too much talk," and "his intrusions offend."[7]

The response of the literary establishment was perhaps predictable. In an article published in the *New York Times Magazine* in 1979, Stephen Singular invited some of the novelists whom Gardner had attacked to respond to his criticism. John Barth called Gardner's argument "very self-serving," and accused him of "making a shrill pitch to the literary right wing that wants to repudiate all of modernism and jump back into the arms of their 19th century literary grandfathers." Updike said he had not bothered to read the book, but that he didn't think fiction today capable of "whatever life-enhancing thing" that Gardner "was proposing." Malamud called Gardner "lacking in generosity and, sometimes, judgment." Joseph Heller characterized him as a "pretentious young man" with "little of intelligence to say." Norman Mailer simply smiled and promised, "We'll meet in heaven."[8]

Almost two years later, in an article in the *New York Times Book Review*, Barth seems again to be alluding to Gardner when he says: "A Proposition-13 mentality pervades the medium; our literary Howard Jarvises are in the ascendancy, preaching 'the family novel' and 'a return to traditional literary values.' And, in the Reagan country of at least the early 1980s, one may expect more of the same: The decade of the Moral Majority will doubtless be the decade of Moral Fiction."[9]

Gardner's detractors thought his aims oversimplified, his arguments conceptually weak, and his tone offensively moralistic, strident, and shrill. His style, a curious amalgam of the Olympian and the earthy, was criticized for being sloppy, inflated, and repetitious. Roger Sale, reviewing the book in *The New York Times*, found these flaws irksome enough to bar the book from any

serious consideration: "It is not, for all its solemnity, a serious book."[10] Rereading the text ten years later, one is forced to acknowledge that many of these criticisms are deserved. *On Moral Fiction* is not a carefully argued work, but rather a loosely organized series of pronouncements, repetitions of Gardner's passionately held beliefs about the moral purpose of art, that are more apologetic than strictly critical or hermeneutical. And one does regret that Gardner's moral fervor sometimes degenerates into puritanical ranting of a most unpleasant sort. But while I share the critics' distaste for these features, I do not think they are sufficiently bothersome to discredit the work as a whole. Furthermore, I would suggest that it is only fair to allow Gardner certain habits of structure and style that are characteristic of the literary mode this work seems to employ, which I would describe as somewhere between proverb and prophecy. When Gardner's subject is "good art," *On Moral Fiction* rolls along, like the Book of Proverbs, on the strength of its own self-evident truths and, as the critics maintain, often "begs the question." When his subject is "bad art," Gardner, like Amos and Jeremiah, freely admonishes, exaggerates, scolds, "rants and raves"—bad manners in a literary critic, but fairly standard practice for a prophet.

Like the Old Testament prophets, Gardner believes his people have gone whoring after false gods: nihilism, relativism, pluralism, skepticism, and existential doubt. Gardner, however, refuses to genuflect at these altars of twentieth-century culture. He insists that we have stared so long into the abyss that our despair has become a mere reflex, and worse yet, intellectual chic. "Confusion and doubt have become the civilized emotions." We have become so dogmatic about skepticism that "we may begin to feel guilty chiefly for possessing a moral code at all."[11]

Gardner is not himself arguing for a "moral code," but he is arguing for the existence of objective values that are right or wrong in themselves and that we all recognize to be so. After all, we continue to instruct our children in these "truths" despite our intellectual debates about the problematics of moral norms. Gardner is tired of the Sartrean brand of pride and prejudice that construes the acceptance of any moral authority outside the self as an act of intellectual cowardice. And he believes that our pretensions about being self-critical have led us into moral confusion and self-contradiction. For example, we pride ourselves on freedom of thought, yet we are so excessively timid about criticizing anything on moral grounds (lest we violate our "anxiously guarded" pluralism) that we tolerate all kinds of falsehood.[12] Likewise, says Gardner, the freedom of inquiry that we insist on so passionately seems to encourage every search except the search for truth; as a result, we have

raised a whole generation willing to believe the reductionist claim that "the cruelest, ugliest thing we can say is likeliest to be true."[13]

Gerald Graff, for one, congratulates Gardner for puncturing one of the "reigning self-deceptions in our 'self-conscious' high-cultural climate that ours is a period of deep and uncompromising self-criticism." In the current climate of deconstruction, agrees Graff, old dogmatisms have merely been replaced by new ones—"negative ones that insist on how unknowable everything is and how naive it is to suppose that language is answerable to external reality."[14]

Yet it was partly Gardner's debunking of these "dogmatisms" that drew critical fire and labeled him "anti-intellectual." For example, Dean Flower says that "Gardner's kind of shirtsleeve seriousness issues from a strident anti-intellectualism" and that what Gardner is really looking for is "justification of his own moralism."[15] Certainly, Gardner does take positions that are morally conservative. He believes, for example, that it is dangerous to raise a whole generation cynical of traditional values; he protests the sheer meanness that has crept into popular and escapist fiction; and he is critical of an "unhealthy fascination with pain and ugliness" in the work of writers like Albee.[16] But Gardner specifically repudiates didactic art, insisting that moral art is the very opposite of art that intends to purvey a "message."

What he is recalling writers to is not, he says, a defense of any particular set of moral values, but a renewal of confidence in the inherent morality of the fictional process, a mode of thought that he likens to a "philosophical method." In his *Art of Fiction*, a manual for creative writers published posthumously in 1984, Gardner tells beginning writers that they "must learn to see fiction's elements ... as the fundamental units of an ancient but still valid kind of ... thought a 'concrete philosophy.'"[17] As a "philosophical method," fiction can lead to the discovery of a "meticulously qualified belief,"[18] but the belief in no way predetermines the shape and flow of the artistic argument (as it does in didactic fiction), because moral fiction "doesn't start out with any clear knowledge of what it wants to say." Rather it ends up with meanings that can only be discovered by the "very process of the fiction's creation,"[19] and the "morality is in the discovery."[20] When "fiction becomes thought," the process "forces the writer to intense yet dispassionate and unprejudiced watchfulness, drives him—in ways abstract logic cannot match—to unexpected discoveries and, frequently, a change of mind."[21]

It is interesting to note here some affinities between Gardner's aesthetic and the hermeneutical theories of the influential German thinker Hans-Georg

Gadamer. Gardner's fictional process has a dialectical structure that resembles the dialectical structure of hermeneutical experience that Gadamer outlines in his magisterial study, *Truth and Method*. Although Gadamer is concerned with the interpretation of texts rather than the writing of them, he is exploring an act of understanding that parallels Gardner's "philosophical method" in several ways and that presupposes a creative act similar to that depicted by Gardner.

The first parallel is their shared starting point, the priority of authentic questioning. For Gadamer, interpretation is a matter of entering into a dialogue with the text, a conversation characterized by the authentic questioning that takes place when conversation partners are genuinely seeking truth. The conversation must be initiated by a real question, for it is "the emergence of the question that opens up, as it were, the being of the object."[22] Genuine questions cannot be manufactured; they "come to us" when we are in an attitude of openness and have a willingness to learn that is itself the consequence of a certain negativity, the *docta ignorantia* for which Socrates is famous, "knowing that we do not know."[23]

This open attitude is what Gardner insists distinguishes moral from moralistic fiction: "We recognize true art by its careful, thoroughly honest search for ... values. It is not didactic because instead of teaching by authority ... it explores, open-mindedly, to learn what it should teach."[24] By submitting himself to the process of "energetic discovery," the writer is committed to questioning and testing his ideas through the process of his fiction; therefore, the artistic ideal takes as its very starting point "an essential and radical openness to persuasion."[25] By contrast, moralistic fiction has no negative moment, no genuine *docta ignorantia;* it only *pretends* "not to know." It differs from moral fiction in the same way that Gadamer says that argument differs from dialogue: its search is not really for truth, but only for confirmation. When a writer is not really using fiction as a means of thought, but only seeking confirmation or advancing a doctrine, says Gardner, he is being *immoral,* and "the more appealing or widely shared the doctrine, the more immoral the book."[26] It is only when the writer is thinking with "passionate commitment to discovering whatever may happen to be true (not merely proving that some particular thing is true)" that he is employing the "full artistic method."[27]

A second parallel with Gadamer is their shared conviction that truth emerges not out of the mind but out of the very ground of the subject matter being explored, the situation that is trying to come to expression through language. In the creation of meaning it is not the author's thoughts that are coming to expression, but the subject matter. Gadamer says that it is "part of ... experi-

ence itself that it seeks and finds words that express it."[28] Gardner agrees. He rejects both Sartrean subjectivity and positivist objectivity for a middle ground: truth emerges when the artist has the patience to follow carefully the interplay of character and event. His model for the middle way is Aristotle's principle of *energeia:* "the actualization of the potential which exists in character and situation."[29] Thus Gardner reminds us that the great insights of literature are not pre-planned by authors but evolve out of the "fiction's implications."[30] Gardner offers a simulacrum of the process at work in "Interest and Truth," the third chapter of *The Art of Fiction*. There he chooses as a starting point the germ of a story—Helen's surprise at the arrival of the Achaians in Troy—and shows how the situation unfolds when probed by the instruments of fictional thought: metaphorical intuition, symbolic association, feeling, taste, and a recognition of the demands of form and function. For Gardner, the fictional subject is somewhat like a hologram, each part containing and reflecting the whole as well as every other part: "As in the universe every atom has an effect, however miniscule, on every other atom, so that to pinch the fabric of Time and Space at any point is to shake the whole length and breadth of it, so in fiction every element has effect on every other, so that to change a character's name from Jane to Cynthia is to make the fictional ground shudder under her feet."[31] In the world of the fictional object the classical distinction between character and situation, between inner and outer, do not obtain, says Gardner, for it is a world established by relation, by the interpenetration of all the elements that together define each other and the whole.[32] Therefore the truth that emerges from the fictional situation is not available beforehand and cannot be satisfactorily abstracted.

Another echo of Gadamer is Gardner's positive regard for tradition. For Gadamer tradition speaks through the language of the work and can scarcely be separated from the subject matter. In fact, tradition is the general subject in which both the interpreter and the text are immersed.[33] For Gardner, too, fictional method is partly "the process of discovery through a struggle with tradition," for "the medium of literary art is not language but language plus the writer's experience and imagination and, above all, the whole of the literary tradition."[34] Therefore, says Gardner, to speak as does Eliot of "tradition and the individual talent" is partly misleading. It is more accurate to speak of "the convergence of tradition and the individual artist's moment," a convergence that leaves "neither tradition nor the individual artist ... unchanged."[35] And because the "medium of art is tradition,"[36] it is not possible to assess a work of art critically "in isolation from its background, the tradition behind the work and the moment (time and place) of its appearing."[37] Thus, Gardner voices an insight compatible with the new hermenuetics and places

himself solidly in opposition to the historical isolation of the New Criticism and the linguistic isolationism of the William Gass brand of postmodernism.

For Gardner, tradition exerts its influence partly through genre. Genre enters as a component of fictional thought, since telling and thinking are not two separate, independant activities but related and mutually informing. (As Wallace Stevens says, every "change of style is a change of subject.") Gardner demonstrates the role of genre in fictional thinking by leading his student-readers of *The Art of Fiction* through the fictional situation mentioned above, showing how the writer "thinking" Helen's situation through the form of the epic will be led to different discoveries than the writer "thinking" through the lens of the medieval tale or the comic yarn or the realistic short story. Each genre provides a different angle of vision, and that perspective becomes part of the subject matter as soon as it is adopted.

This mutual relevance is true for all the elements that compose the fictional subject matter. Because the meanings in the fictional world are so radically contextual, are virtually webs of interconnections, the work forms a "closed and self-sustaining system" that resists abstract paraphrase. This, incidentally, is what Gass and the postmodernists claim to be the self-limiting nature of art, on which they base their refusal of reference. For Gardner, however, the holism of the work, while it refuses to be reduced to abstract paraphrase, does in fact refer, the way that a hologram in which the whole of the universe is reflected can be said to refer. The fictional process, which discovers meanings embedded in situations, "reflects a fundamental conviction of the artist that the mind does not impose structures on reality" but rather, "as an element of total reality—a capsulated universe—discovers, in discovering itself, the world." The artist discovers moral meanings that are "absolutely valid, and true," not only for the artist, but for "everyone, or at least for all human beings."[38]

Gardner does not explore the nature of these moral meanings. But, in *The Art of Fiction,* he speaks of a moment in the fiction's development when "unexpected connections begin to surface; hidden causes become plain; life becomes, however briefly and unstably, organized; the universe reveals itself, if only for the moment, as inexorably moral; the outcome of the various characters' actions is at last manifest; and we see the responsibility of free will."[39] What the writer discovers is an interconnectedness and an order that undergirds without assimilating or destroying individual freedom. In the novel's resonant closing, "what moves us is not just that characters, images, and events get some form of recapitulation or recall. We are moved by the increasing connectedness of things, ultimately a connectedness of values."[40]

It is obvious that such an epiphany must rest on a metaphysic that legitimizes both freedom and the mimetic connectedness of the several spheres of reality. That Gardner believes in such "mimetic connectedness" seems clear. For example, he likes the idea that it is the Old English *treow*, the word for tree, which gives the word *true* its "deeply rooted idea." And he invokes Kenneth Burke to remind us that all language and all "deeply held symbolism" come from our intercourse with the world of things, and that, as Burke would say, "all conscious life" is therefore "poetic context."[41] This claim for the contextuality of all conscious life bears directly on the issues of metaphor and mimesis that is at the heart of the Gardner-Gass debate, and I will return to this claim later in this essay.

As we have noted, the dialogical dimension of Gardner's model of "fictional thought" is in keeping with hermeneutical theory, as is Gardner's confidence in the self-transcending nature of the fictional process. In the Gardner-Gass debates, however, and in the critical furor over *On Moral Fiction*, it is often the authoritarian voice that sounds the loudest. Nevertheless, this obsession with Gardner's moralism is unfortunate, since there is much else in Gardner's text that deserves consideration: his argument for the public nature of art, his confidence in the power of language to discover sources of moral coherence concealed from our everyday vision, his concern for the human community, and his warnings against the privatization of the artist.

On the other hand, since Gardner's "moral imperialism" was the red flare that attracted attention to *On Moral Fiction* and provided the impetus for the debates that followed, perhaps his method served a useful function. In *Mystery and Manners*, Flannery O'Connor defended her use of the grotesque by saying that she was writing for an audience that was hard of hearing and almost blind, and so she had to resort to shouting and drawing large, exaggerated figures. In the same spirit, perhaps, Gardner felt that he had to shout the cause of moral fiction and draw a large, exaggerated figure of the artist as a defender of the good.

Certainly, Gardner succeeded in rousing his audience, sympathizers and adversaries alike, most notably his friend and long-standing adversary, William Gass, the articulate champion of the kind of amoral fiction that was for Gardner the very embodiment of the evils of the age.

The World Within the Word: Gass's Refusal of Relevance

In *Fiction and the Figures of Life* (1970), which Larry McCaffery calls "a kind of Bible for contemporary innovative writers," William Gass contends that with "metafiction" (Gass's epithet for the new fiction, which is technically experimental and determinedly non-mimetic), the novelist has come of age: "He is ceasing to pretend that his business is to render the world; he knows, more often now, that his business is to make one, and to make one from the only medium of which he is a master—language."[42] Unfortunately, says Gass, readers and critics have not yet learned to follow fiction in its linguistic turn. They "continue to interpret novels as if they were philosophies ..., platforms to speak from, middens from which may be scratched important messages for mankind; they have predictably looked for content, not form; they have regarded fictions as ways of viewing reality and not as additions to it."[43] What Gass is calling for is a newly educated readership willing to renounce their mimetic expectations that literature will communicate information about the world.

Gass is ideally suited for the role of metafictional mentor. For one thing, he is a professional language philosopher who studied under Wittgenstein during his undergraduate days at Cornell and subsequently wrote his doctoral dissertation, on the subject of metaphor, under Max Black, whose *Models and Metaphor* helped to revolutionize thinking about the cognitive value of figurative language. Moreover, Gass is a supreme stylist, a carver of elegant sentences that are often breathtakingly beautiful. (Even Gardner acknowledged that Gass was the "most proficient writer of sentences in America today."[44]) Although his highly allusive style sometimes makes his ideas difficult to follow, reading his critical essays is a keenly pleasurable aesthetic experience. As Larry McCaffery has observed, even in his essays, Gass is intent on drawing our attention to the sensuous qualities of language,[45] and his stylish iconoclasm has provided postmodern studies with a treasury of finely phrased insights.

Gass's aesthetic begins in a love affair with language—with words, words, words. In a 1976 symposium on fiction, which Gass participated in along with Donald Barthelme, Walker Percy, and Grace Paley, he had this to say about the power of language:

> Language is ... more powerful as an experience of things than the experience of things. Signs are more potent experiences than anything else, so when one is dealing with the things that really count, then you deal with words. They have a reality far exceeding the things they name .... When we think about our own life, it's surrounded by symbols. That's what we experience day and night.[46]

The recognition that our lives are inherenetly symbolic is fundamental to Gass's theory of fiction. With the possible exception of mysticism, we have no experiences that are unmediated, and when we try to come to terms with these experiences, we do so through the medium of language, which "interfering filter" amounts to a fictional layer between us and an "unprotected confrontation with reality." In *Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife*, Gass says: "No one can imagine simply—merely; one must imagine within words or paint or metal, communicating genes or multiplying numbers. Imagination is its medium realized."[47]

But Gass's main intention is not to remind us of the Kantian proposition that the mind is the co-creator of all that we perceive, and that thus, even in ordinary experience, the distinction between fiction and fact is already blurred. Rather, he wants to stress the primacy of the word in *generating* our experience. Our life is surrounded by symbols, and, he says, "that's what we experience day and night. In the old days we might have supposed that the daffodil was much, much more interesting than the word daffodil, but I simply would deny that. The word daffodil is much more interesting than daffodils. There's much more to it."[48] For Gass, a word does not just describe; it creates a "net of essential relations" (its sense) that transcends the thing it represents (its reference). Thus, the word "daffodil" comes to us steeped in riches that it has not borrowed from the "thing itself" but derives instead from its own linguistic nature.

Of course, in ordinary life we are not often conscious of the symbolic richness of our language. We "use" language referentially to mean things, to "make love, buy bread, and blow up bridges." The language of everyday discourse is merely instrumental; when it has performed its function, it "passes out of consciousness, is extinguished by its use."[49]

In *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein showed how the meaning of words is determined by how they are employed in various "language games." One of Gass's basic tenets is that the language game of fiction is fundamentally different from that of ordinary speech. In the "language game" called literature, claims Gass, words undergo a metamorphosis. For one thing, their sign character recedes into the background. They are no longer labels tied to things like cans to the tails of dogs; nor are they transparent windows for looking through onto the world of things. They are objects to be looked *at*, not *through*, objects with their own weight and presence, like chunks of matter that can be held in the hand. "So ordinarily language ought to be like the gray inaudible wife who services the great man: an ideal engine, utterly self-effacing, devoted without remainder to its task; but when language is used as

an art it is no longer used merely to communicate. It demands to be treated as a thing, inert and voiceless."[50]

This transformation is partially due to the shift in the direction of our attention once we have been attracted by the beauty of literary language, the shift alluded to by Gadamer in his distinction between sign and symbol. Gadamer uses the example of our habit of scanning the sky to read tomorrow's weather. At first the clouds are regarded only as messages of an approaching storm; but when we begin to be captivated by the shape and color of the clouds themselves and "are filled with the beauty of what we see there and linger over it, we experience a shift in the direction of our attention that causes its sign character to retreat into the background."[51] Similarly, Gass believes that words divorced from their merely referential function are objects worthy of our contemplation, so he insists that literary words are not transparent but opaque, dense, heavy with their own being.

The shift from reference to sense, from transparency to opacity, represents a shift in the ontological status of literary language. In *The World Within the Word,* a collection of essays that explores the ontology of language, Gass says that

> the words on checks and bills of lading, in guides and invoices, the words which magnify themselves on billboards, broadsides, walls and hoardings ..., whose heaps create each of our encyclopedias of information, our textbooks, articles of confederation ..., so many signs from every culture and accreditation ..., legal briefs, subtitles, shopping lists and memos, ... summations, lectures, theories, general laws, universal truths—every other mark whatever, whether sky-writ, in the sand or on a wall or water—these words are not in any central or essential sense the same as the passionately useless rigamarole that makes up literary language, because the words in poems, to cite the signal instance, have undergone a radical, though scarcely surprising, ontological transformation.[52]

To pry words loose from their mimetic moorings, to refuse them service in the world and declare them "passionately useless rigamarole" seems—and may be—an aesthetic indulgence. It is, of course, exactly this insistence on the passionate uselessness of art that Gardner pronounced elitist and immoral. Whether Gass's war against mimesis is merely a revival of nineteenth-century aestheticism, "art for art's sake," as Gardner believed, or whether it is a renunciation, in the Heideggerian spirit, of the Western utilitarian impluse to convert all experience into useful knowledge is a question that cannot be answered without some attention to the language theory that informs the metafictional project.

Gass's non-mimetic theory of fiction is rooted in his understanding of the metaphorical nature of language. The study of metaphor has been one of the

primary philosophical endeavors of the past several decades and has produced a vast amount of scholarship. Warren Shibles' 1971 bibliography on metaphor contains 300 pages and about 4,000 titles and, even so, covers only the material up through the 1960s, which was really the threshold of the greatest outpouring. Out of these studies has come a new appreciation of the cognitive role of metaphor in a variety of fields: science, psychology, and the social sciences, as well as literature and philosophy. The insights from these studies are overturning many of the classical assumptions about the relationship among language, knowledge, and truth.

To appreciate the revolutionary thrust of these insights, we need to see them in the context of the views of metaphor that were dominant until recently. Variously named the "substitution theory," the "comparison theory," and the "classical theory," these theories share a view of reality that Lakoff and Johnson call the "myth of objectivism." In their popular study, *Metaphors We Live By*, they suggest several components of this view. There is the belief that reality is made up of objective entities with properties independent of our experience of them, and that we can understand these objects in terms of categories and concepts that accurately correspond to these properties. Words must have fixed meanings that express these categories and concepts so that our knowledge of reality can be expressed in objective and precise language.[53]

According th this view, then, language can perform its function only if there is a correspondence of names to the things they signify. Now metaphor, according to Aristotle in the *Poetics*, consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else. In the classical view, therefore, metaphor is only a substitute for the "proper name," and behind every figurative comparison is an objective and literal comparison that is the "real meaning" of the metaphor.

Gass's mentor, Max Black, is one of several key figures (including I. A. Richards, Monroe Beardsley, and Philip Wheelwright) to rehabilitate metaphor by freeing it from its service as a mere "substitute" for objective and literal comparison to things "out there." Gass's theory of fiction is really an extension of this project to free language from its referential servitude. He is also indebted, I believe, to some of the specific contributions made to that project by his mentor. In his influential *Models and Metaphors: Studies in Language and Philosophy*, Black insists that we cannot say a metaphor is a stand-in for some literal, pre-existing similarity between two things, since in most cases, "prior to the construction of the metaphor, we would have been hard put to it to find any literal resemblance." Furthermore, he adds, "It

would be more illuminating in some of these cases to say that the metaphor creates the similarity than to say that it formulates some similarity antecedently existing."[54] For Black, the meaning of metaphor is created through the interaction of the two terms and not through any resemblance of either term to something outside of or independent of the metaphorical interchange. Thus, the meaning cannot be paraphrased in plain language without losing the insight unleashed within the figurative language.

Gass applies Black's radically contextual theory of meaning to the creation of meaning in fictional worlds. For Gass, fiction is incurably figurative and contextual—its "people and their destinies, the things they prize, the way they feel, the landscapes they inhabit, are indistinct from words and all their orderings."[55] Just as Black maintains that the meaning of metaphor is created entirely through verbal interaction and not through the resemblance of either term to something outside the metaphor, so Gass maintains that the reality that fictional characters and events possess is conferred on them entirely by sentences, not by their resemblance to characters or events in the outside world. There is no "out-of-doors in the world where language is the land," he says in "The Ontology of the Sentence, or How to Make a World of Words,"[56] an essay that originated as a lecture given in 1977 at Cornell University in honor of Max Black's retirement.

Gass begins another essay, "The Medium of Fiction," with an assertion that has become one of the most quoted "sayings" of metafiction: "It seems a country-headed thing to say: that literature is language, that stories and the places and the people in them are merely made of words as chairs are made of smoothed sticks and sometimes of cloth or metal tubes." Gass admits that the notion that "novels should be made of words, and merely words, is shocking, really ... as though you had discovered that your wife were made of rubber: the bliss of all those years, the fears ... from sponge."[57]

Perhaps we can recover something of the shock of considering characters as "linguistic selves" constituted solely by words by comparing Gass's views with those of Gardner, whose notion of character is mimetic in the more traditional sense. In *On Moral Fiction* Gardner says, "One can't imagine a Dante, Chaucer or Shakespeare or Racine without characters drawn from a scrutiny of real people" and "to fail to imitate people as they are ... would reveal a lack of the true artist's most noticeable characteristic: fascination with the feelings, gestures, obsessions, and phobias of the people of his own time and place." But for Gass, the observations of people as they "really are" would have no bearing on the creation of characters, since characters are not in any

way replicas of real people and "nothing that is appropriate to persons can be correctly said of them."[58]

For Gardner, a literary character begins as "an apparition in the writer's mind" from which the writer struggles to create a "lifelike human being, a virtual human being."[59] For Gass, the literary character exists not as an "appearance of reality" or as an image in the Humean sense, but as an idea. Gass wants the reader to attend to the words that are the linguistic body of the character, and not (as readers usually do) make attempts to visualize the character. For Gass, such attempts at visualization actually falsify the aesthetic experience, since "there is no path from idea to sense," and "no amount of careful elaboration" of a character "is going to enable us to *see* him."[60]

Accepting the verbal status of characterization has further consequences for literary practice. For example, Gardner feels that it is important that writers put into the mouths of characters only dialogue that would be appropriate for that character, even when doing so means sacrificing a choice expression or relinquishing an opportunity to share a morally meaningful idea with the reader. For Gass, appropriateness is not a constraint: "You can choose to release your language for all your characters or you can decide to restrict it in certain ways. Both are perfectly reasonable decisions of a thoroughly technical sort. To say a plumber must speak in a certain way is ... only a convention."[61] Because characters are primarily sources of verbal energy and focal points in the aesthetic design, the only constraints in characterization are formal constraints.

Of course, Gass realizes that words cannot be freed entirely from reference, for they come to fiction already imbued with meaning, already infected by their correspondence in the world. But Gass maintains that their worldly reference is overwhelmed when they are integrated into the fictional context. In "Carrots, Noses, Snow Rose Roses," Gass offers an extended metaphor for the transformational power of context. Just as in the building of a snowman a carrot becomes a nose and two pieces of coal are transformed into eyes, so words appearing in the context of any literary work ("a veritable engine of alteration"[62]) experience an ontological transformation. "The snowman stands there, smiling into the wind, a lesson in ontology, an incredible confluence of contexts, a paradigm for poetry and the pure world of the word."[63]

What all this means, finally, is that for Gass the truth value of stories is not a matter of any presumed correspondence between the characters, events, and relationships of the story and those in the external world. Because in fiction

there are "no descriptions, only constructions," we cannot count on fiction to bring us messages about the "outside world" or to provide moral instruction. "Write and right. Of course they have nothing to do with one another," Gass quotes approvingly from Gertrude Stein.[64] At more length, he explains in an interview:

> Fiction is not a form of meaning, nor a means of attaining wisdom .... As long as you keep the work on the plane of making statements about the world, then the question becomes: "Are these statements wise statements, deep statements, true statements?" But in my view the integrity of the work is all that matters aesthetically. I mean, my books are made up. They're not about the world. I don't have any wisdom and I have never met a writer who had.[65]

Metaphor and Mimesis

For Gass, then, artistic truth is equivalent to formal integrity, and moral fiction is simply fiction that is faithful to the demands of its own formal nature. Truth is beauty; beauty, truth—both are functions of form. The work has weight, one might say, but not extension, for it makes no meaningful connection with anything beyond itself. It looks inward, but not outward, for what surrounds any work of art is only "empty space and silence."[66]

The insular splendor that Gass proposes for the work of art raises many questions. To begin with, it is not clear what formal beauty would amount to in such a detached object, for usually in a fiction what strikes us as formally beautiful (the organic relationships interconnecting character, plot, theme, and outcome) is what answers to our need, not just to have the pieces fit together, but to have them fit together meaningfully, to display, in their fitting together, some keenly felt, deeply appropriate coherence. In an art work completely severed from any external reality, what would ground our perceptions of meaningful coherence? Is it even possible to gain access to a work whose influences are entirely "centripetal," a fiction which has no "outside," but only an "inside"? Where would be the point of entry? Wouldn't a fiction that was purely self-reflexive be also necessarily and merely solipsistic?

Questions such as these bring us the core of the Gardner-Gass dispute. Gardner contends that the radical self-reflexiveness of postmodernist fiction is morally irresponsible, that its refusal of relevance is motivated by aesthetic escapism, a wish to create, in fictional worlds, a serene and self-contained beauty against which the everyday world of distraction and hard troubles can make no claim. Gass, on the other hand, suggests that the demand for moral

meaning amounts to exploitation of the aesthetic values of the text and derives from the Western rationalistic tendency to master experience by converting it into knowledge.

What is needed to overcome this opposition is an understanding of fiction that will not pit its relevance (mimesis) against its self-reflexiveness (metaphor). One of the many hermeneutical contributions of the philosopher Paul Ricoeur is to give us just such an understanding. In his *The Rule of Metaphor*, Ricoeur creatively reappropriates Aristotle's theory of mimesis, contending that Aristotle never intended mimesis to be understood as duplication of an already existing objective reality but as the creative revisioning of essential realities. We need to see, says Ricoeur, that "mimesis is poiesis, that is, fabrication, construction, creation."[67]

The same dynamic holds true for metaphor. Metaphor does not simply report on already existing resemblances; it creates new resemblances, giving us insight into likenesses that did not exist prior to the metaphorical utterance. Far from being a mere substitute for literal meaning, metaphor allows new creative connections to appear precisely by breaking down literal meaning. When we say that architecture is frozen music, we have to let go of our conventional definitions of "architecture" and of "music" to make room for a new meaning. Thus metaphor is always slightly subversive of the status quo because it is always breaking apart conventional meanings to let the new emerge. It is this dynamic emergence of new meaning which is common to both metaphor and mimesis, as Ricoeur understands them. Both are creative redescriptions of reality.

Although Gardner does not use Ricoeur's sophisticated hermeneutical reasoning, I believe that he shares a similar understanding of mimesis. He makes clear that it is not fictional reportage that he is after, but the imitation of "reality's process—'the ineluctable modality of the visible' as Stephen Dedalus puts it."[68] Gardner says that the raw material of art is not the "world as seen directly" or experienced actually, but the imaginative world that is the "laboratory of the unexperienced."[69] He also says more than once that imitation which is mere mimicry is neither revelatory nor transforming. In the *Art of Fiction*, Gardner warns young writers that "nothing can be more limiting to the imagination, nothing is quicker to turn on the psyche's censoring devices and distortion systems, than trying to write truthfully and interestingly about one's own home town, one's Episcopalian mother, one's crippled younger sister." Thus Gardner's advice is not to mimic slavishly what one knows through experience, but to "choose a genre."[70] Genre is for Gardner "the artist's primary unit of thought,"[71] which, like Kant's schema, helps to organ-

ize and assimilate the raw data of experience. For Gardner, then, as for Gass, it is "design" and not "data" that the artist must submit to in shaping a fictional world.

When Gass makes his arguments against fictional relevance, it turns out not to be this deeper dimension of mimesis that he is referring to but something akin to simple representation. Take, for example, the following witty caricature of the mimetic search:

> There is a painting by Picasso which depicts a pitcher, candle, blue enamel pot. They are sitting, unadorned, upon the barest table. Would we wonder what was cooking in that pot? Is it beans, perhaps, or carrots, a marmite? ... Now I see that it must be beans, for above the pot—you barely see them—are quaking lines of steam, just the lines we associate with boiling beans ... or is it blanching pods? Scholarly research, supported by a great foundation, will discover that exactly such a pot was used to cook cassoulet in the kitchens of Charles the Fat ... or was it Charles the Bald? There's a dissertation in that. And this explains the dripping candle standing by the pot. (Is it dripping? No? A pity. Let's go on.) For isn't Charles the Fat himself that candle? Oh no, some say, he's not! Blows are struck. Reputations made and ruined. Someone will see eventually that the pot is standing on a table, not a stone. But the pot has just come from the stove, it will be pointed out. Has not Picasso caught that vital moment of transition? The pot is too hot. The brown is burning. Oh, not this table, which has been coated with resistant plastic. Singular genius—blessed man—he thinks of everything.[72]

As satire, this is delicious. But the view so wittily lampooned here (an obtuse literal-mindedness varnished with academic pretention) has nothing to do with the mimetic search for relevance that Gardner is concerned to protect. We have seen that a defense of mimetic relevance is not at the same time a defense of traditional realism and in no way maintains that the design of fiction is "parasitic" upon the data of the world. We agree with Gass that it is not fiction's responsibility to report on literal truth or to "make manifest the 'bare facts' of reality."[73] Fictional constructs are essentially metaphoric, and the same arguments that freed metaphor from its dependency on literal resemblance can be applied to fiction.

However, it does not necessarily follow, as Gass suggests, that, freed from their servitude to literal truth, fictions are therefore "uncommittal about reality."[74] Gass's "verbal materialism" creates a dichotomy between language and the external world that makes no sense outside posivitism. "Nature does not make metaphors,"[75] it is true, but neither does the dictionary. Metaphors and fictions "belong" neither to nature nor to the dictionary but to the world of human understanding, and it is *this* world, rather than the world of fiction,

that has no "out of doors," for it encompasses all our human experience, including our reading of fiction. Therefore, the fictional object does not dwell in a void, as Gass says it does, surrounded only by "empty space and silence."[76] On the contrary, because it is itself a "worldlike object for interpretation,"[77] the fictional work dwells necessarily in an established interpretive world already rich in understandings, and every fiction adds new understandings to that interpretive world not previously known.

But are these new understandings at all relevant to the "way things are" in the great world, and, if so, relevant in what sense? Let us return to Gass's mentor, Max Black, and his account of metaphor as "seeing as," developed in his article "More About Metaphor." He says that, although metaphors do not simply report on previously existing connections, but actually create connections, they change the "way things are" in our human reality and they introduce "some small change into a 'world' that includes statements and thoughts ... as well as clouds and rocks."[78] The "relations" generated by metaphor, says Black, have an "objective" as well as a "subjective" side, and "each may contribute to the other."

Black is reminding us that our reality is composed of perspectives and that every new perspective amounts to a change in our world. Or, as Wallace Stevens says in "Adagia," "Metaphor creates a new reality from which the original appears to be unreal."[79] But that newly created "reality" *is* real; it is not simply a subjective illusion or a verbal chimera. Furthermore, because our reality is not static, the "actual" and the "possible" are not rigidly demarcated realms, with fiction occupying one realm and what we call "life" occupying the other. The world of interpretation to which fiction belongs is located at the very juncture of the actual and the possible, where, as Stevens says, "Reality is not what it is. It consists of the many realities which it can be made into."[80] In summary, then, fiction creates possible worlds that are perspectives from which we gain new understandings of our world, and since our "world" includes both "what is" and "what is not," these new understandings are not radically "uncommittal about reality," as Gass would have it. On the contrary, says Ricoeur, it is precisely fiction's ability to disclose the unreal, that is, the concealed potentialities of the present, that provides openings for us into the real world of human action.

We see then that, although both Ricoeur and Gass acknowledge that fiction is "unreal," that is, not a duplication of reality, they are led on that account to opposite conclusions. Gass is led to conclude that fiction in "non-committal about reality"; Ricoeur concludes that "by opening us to the unreal," fiction leads us to "what is essential in reality."[81] I doubt that the distance between

these conclusions can be accounted for by measuring differences in their reasonings along the way, but only by recognizing the distance between their starting points, the metaphysical perspective that each takes as an *a priori* premise. I suggest that, at a certain stage in the argument about fiction's mimetic relevance, we are brought inevitably to the question of whether there is, as Gardner contends, a "built-in metaphysic" for fiction. To agree with Gardner that there is such a metaphysic is not to say that the well-made fiction gives us a molecular model of the well-made universe, but rather that mimesis, understood as creative revisioning of the real, is itself a "kind of metaphor of reality," as Ricoeur puts it.[82]

One of the underpinnings of this built-in metaphysic of fiction is the belief that language is not a closed system, but that in its symbolic dimensions, something comes to language from beyond language itself. This can be so only if the reality in which human language is uttered is itself symbolic and there is, as Ricoeur says, some "primordial rootedness of Discourse in Life."[83] If there is a language beyond human language in the very "capacity of the cosmos to signify,"[84] then there are pathways between reality and syntax which are not mere projections, as Gass insists.

There is an interesting passage in "The Ontology of the Sentence" in which Gass muses over the problem. Are we right "to seek in language the imprint of reality?" he asks. And does "it shape the syntax of our sentences?"[85] In answering these questions, he calls upon Heidegger's essay "The Origin of the Work of Art." Heidegger, in what Gass calls a "moment of uncustomary lucidity," responds thus:

> What could be more obvious than that man transposes his propositional way of understanding things into the structure of the thing itself? Yet this view, seemingly critical yet actually rash and ill-considered, would have to explain first how such a transposition of propositional structure into the thing is supposed to be possible without the thing already become visible. The question which comes first and functions as the standard, proposition-structure or thing-structure, remains to this hour undecided. It even remains doubtful whether in this form the question is at all decidable.[86]

Gass uses this passage to demonstrate the impossibility of ever resolving the question of "reality's imprint." He urges us, therefore, to give up the "ancient dream" of relevance, for that mutuality between fact and value, quality and apprehension that we long for is available only within the opaque constructions of fiction, where "language *is* the land."

It is significant, however, that Gass stops short in his quoting of Heidegger and does not give us the whole drift of his reflection. For in the paragraph

immediately following, Heidegger continues: "Actually, the sentence structure does not provide the standard for the pattern of thing-structure, nor is the latter merely mirrored in the former. Both sentence and thing-structure derive, in their typical form and their possible mutual relationship from a common and more original source."[87]

Heidegger finds the sought-for mutuality between "word" and "thing" in their derivation from a common source, the fundamental unity which is being. For Heidegger, it is the whole of reality where "language is the land." The language of being "moves all things" and "what moves all things moves because it speaks."[88] Language does not "belong" to human beings; rather human beings belong to language, which is the "house of Being" itself, and the artist's calling is to share the word which is "the Source, the bourne of Being."[89] Therefore, although Heidegger and Gass share a similarly exalted view of poetic language and a similar disdain for mere representationalism, they fundamentally disagree, at the level of *a priori* premise, about the "work" of a work of art. For Gass, as we have seen, the fictional world is a closed system of meaning, with all of its lights trapped inside like fireflies shut up in a jar. For Heidegger, it is the "earth" that is mute, self-secluding, and concealing; and it is the "work" of the work of art to provide the "Open of the world,"[90] a clearing in the actual through which truth appears.

By the same token, Gass and Ricoeur, both students of metaphor who share a sophisticated understanding of the contextual nature of metaphorical meaning, disagree on the level of *a priori* premise. For Ricoeur, metaphorical systems can give us genuine insight into reality. Though contextual, they are not hermetically sealed within the closed precincts of language, that is, within "sense." Language creations have reference and are mimetic, providing we understand *mimesis* as *poiesis*, that is, as "fabrication, construction, creation." What Ricoeur wants us to see is that reference conceived of as an external, objective correspondence (the level of reference that Gass seems to have in mind) is not the only sort of reference that is legitimate, even though scientific rationalism would have us believe so. Ricoeur wants to attune us to a "referring" that is within and in front of, rather than behind and outside of. He accomplishes this partly with his concept of metaphorical truth, where new meaning rises up through the "ruins" of a literal meaning.

But Ricoeur goes further and asks what is the "reference" of this process of metaphor? Is the metaphoric process itself mimetic? His answer is yes, providing we do not interpret mimesis as mere duplication of reality. If we understand mimesis as "redescription of reality," we can say that it provides the metaphor for reality's process, the dynamic emergence of being from non-

being, which is always letting new worlds appear. It is this "dynamic vision of reality which is the implicit ontology of the metaphorical utterance"[91] and which is the ultimate ontological "reference" of mimesis, as well.

We may seem here to be a long way from Gardner's argument for mimesis, and in terms of hermeneutical sophistication, perhaps we are. But I do believe that Ricoeur's "dynamic vision of reality" is what Gardner means by mimesis. He says the art work is "not an imitation of some actual gorilla or day lily but a creation parallel, in its principles of vitality and growth, to the animal or plant, hence a new object under the sun." Art imitates "reality's process," he frequently repeats: "In great art process-imitation is always primary."[92]

Certainly, if we turn to Gardner's novels, we can see demonstrated his grasp of mimesis as creative revisioning of the real. The "dynamic emergence of new worlds" in human terms requires the pain and joy of self-transcendence, and it is this process that Gardner chronicles in his major novels. His characters suffer an enlargement of vision that follows the path of metaphor, their new meaning rising out of the ruins of some small, parochial, but passionately protected understanding of the world. This breaking open of new possibilities is the truth value of fiction and the source of mimetic relevance. It sometimes occurs in the lives of fictional characters, and sometimes not. But in great fiction it always occurs in the experience of the reader, and then the reader is tempted to join Gardner in saying, as his narrator does in the last line of *The Sunlight Dialogues*, "All this, though some may consider it strange, mere fiction, is the truth."[93]

Notes

[1] John Gardner, *On Moral Fiction* (hereafter *OMF*) (New York: Basic Books, 1978), p. 18.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 66.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 54-55.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 86.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 89.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 87.

[7] *Ibid.*, pp. 92-93.

[8] As quoted in Stephen Singular, "The Sound and the Fury over Fiction," *New York Times Magazine*, July 8, 1979, pp. 13-15, 34, 36-39.

[9] John Barth, "How Is Fiction Doing?" *New York Times Book Review*, as quoted in David Cowart, *Arches and Light: The Fiction of John Gardner* (Carbondale, Il.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983), p. 17.

[10] Roger Sale, "Banging on the Table," *New York Times Book Review*, April 16, 1978, p. 11.

[11] Gardner, *OMF*, p. 77.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 42.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 126.

[14] Gerald Graff, "What Has Gone Wrong with Fiction?" *Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 16, 1978, p. 21.

[15] Dean Flower, "Fiction Moralized," *Hudson Review*, vol. 31 (1978), pp. 534-35.

[16] Gardner, *OMF*, pp. 42, 43, 58.

[17] Gardner, *The Art of Fiction: Notes on Craft for Young Writers* (hereafter *AF*) (New York: Vintage Books, 1984), p. 36.

[18] Gardner, *OMF*, p. 65.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 108.

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 14.

[21] *Ibid.*, pp. 108, 109.

[22] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Crossroad, 1986), p. 326.

[23] *Ibid.*, pp. 325-26.

[24] Gardner, *OMF*, p. 19.

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 99.

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 117.

[27] *Ibid.*, pp. 122-23.

[28] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 337.

[29] Gardner, *OMF*, p. 23.

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 123.

[31] Gardner, *AF*, p. 46.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 50.

[33] Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleirmacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer* (Evanston, Il.: Northwestern University Press, 1969), p. 199.

[34] Gardner, *OMF*, p. 124.

[35] *Ibid.*, pp. 167-68.

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 167.

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 163.

[38] *Ibid.*, p. 122.

[39] Gardner, *AF*, p. 184.

[40] *Ibid.*, p. 192.

[41] Gardner, *OMF*, p. 67.

[42] William H. Gass, *Fiction and the Figures of Life* (hereafter *FFL*) (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), p. 24.

[43] *Ibid.*, p. 25.

[44] Gardner, as quoted in Arthur M. Saltzman, *The Fiction of William Gass: The Consolation of Language*, Crosscurrents/Modern Critiques third series, ed. Jerome Klinkowitz (Carbondale, Il.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986), p. 137.

[45] Larry McCaffery, *The Metafictional Muse: The Works of Robert Coover, Donald Barthelme and William Gass* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1982), p. 154.

[46] William Gass, as quoted in *ibid.*, p. 151.

[47] Gass, as quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

[48] Gass, as quoted in *ibid.*, p. 151.

[49] Gass, *FFL*, pp. 30-31.

[50] *Ibid.*, p. 93.

[51] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 135.

[52] Gass, *The World Within the Word* (hereafter *WWW*) (New York: Knopf, 1978), p. 283.

[53] George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), pp. 186-88.

[54] Max Black, *Models and Metaphors: Studies in Language and Philosophy* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1962), p. 37.

[55] Gass, *FFL*, p. 8.

[56] Gass, *WWW*, p. 317.

[57] Gass, *FFL*, p. 27.

[58] *Ibid.*, p. 44.

[59] Singular, "The Sound and the Fury over Fiction," p. 28.

[60] Gass, *FFL*, p. 44.

[61] Gass, as quoted in Saltzman, *William Gass*, p. 160.

[62] Gass, *WWW*, p. 286.

[63] *Ibid.*, p. 288.

[64] Gass, *FFL*, pp. 84–85.

[65] Gass, as quoted in McCaffery, *The Metafictional Muse*, p. 157.

[66] Gass, *FFL*, p. 44.

[67] Paul Ricoeur, "Metaphor and the Main Problem of Hermeneutics," *New Literary History*, vol. 6, no. 1 (1974), p. 109.

[68] Gardner, *AF*, p. 50.

[69] Gardner, *OMF*, p. 13.

[70] Gardner, *AF*, p. 37.

[71] *Ibid.*, p. 18.

[72] Gass, *FFL*, p. 39.

[73] Terence Hawkes, *Metaphor*, The Critical Idiom series, no. 25, ed. John Jump (London: Methuen and Company, 1972), p. 10.

[74] Gass, *WWW*, p. 338.

[75] *Ibid.*, p. 327.

[76] Gass, *FFL*, p. 44.

[77] As described by Annie Dillard in *Living by Fiction* (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1982), p. 155.

[78] Max Black, "More About Metaphor," *Dialectica*, vol. 31, no. 3–4 (1977), p. 451.

[79] Wallace Stevens, "Adagia," *Opus Posthumous*, ed. Samuel French Morse (New York: Knopf, 1969), p. 169.

[80] *Ibid.*, p. 178.

[81] Ricoeur, "The Narrative Function," *Semeia*, n.d., p. 296.

[82] *Ibid.*, p. 292.

[83] Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth, Tex.: The Texas Christian University Press, 1976), p. 59.

[84] *Ibid.*, p. 62.

[85] Gass, *WWW*, pp. 317–18.

[86] Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 24.

[87] *Ibid.*

[88] Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter D. Hertz (New York: Harper and Row, 1982), p. 95.

[89] *Ibid.*, pp. 63, 65.

[90] Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 49.

[91] Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-Disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*, trans. Robert Czerny with Kathleen McLaughlin and John Costello (Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1975), p. 297.

[92] Gardner, *OMF*, p. 65.

[93] Gardner, *The Sunlight Dialogues* (1972; reprint ed., New York: Ballantine Books, 1983), p. 746.

On the Road: Literary Traveling as an Addition to the Community College Humanities Curriculum

Jeffrey M. Laing

A major challenge for humanities teachers in the community college is to overcome the fears of entering and returning students regarding the conventional curriculum. I have tried to deal with these fears by composing a humanities course devoted exclusively to books of travel. This course is a self-contained investigation into a sub-genre of mainstream thought and literature that also serves as a bridge to more conventional works. The only criteria for including a travel book in my course is that the work must be a journey into the author's and reader's minds as well as a literal journey into distant lands.

The genesis of this course was my reading of the works of Paul Fussell. In *The Great War and Modern Memory,* Fussell discusses the great discrepancy between the poetry of the British writers of World War I and their actual experiences of the war. Their romanticized and non-realistic perceptions of war and art were, at least in part, predetermined by their Edwardian sense of the world and themselves. Fussell's follow-up book, *Abroad: British Literary Traveling between the Wars,* catalogues the English desire to correct this romantically flawed vision of the world. In fact, it is the disillusionment of the World War I soldier and traveler that leads to a more catholic and objectively correct view of the world beyond the shores of Great Britain. I have long felt that my students had to separate out their own purely subjective responses to artistic works before they could begin a formal study of literature; my reading of Fussell provided me with both a focus and a vocabulary for dealing with my students' confusion of the actual and the imaginative.

At the time I was reading Fussell, I was also leading a rather schizophrenic professional existence. I was teaching at two New Mexico colleges, the University of New Mexico, Los Alamos campus and Santa Fe Community College, which had extremely different student bodies. The economic, educational, cultural, political, and career backgrounds of my students not only were widely divergent but frequently antithetical to one another. During those

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long, dislocating forty-mile drives between colleges, I posited two similarities between these groups (and perhaps among all student groups) that I wanted to explore. The first area was the Western cultural given of the desirability of adventure, mobility, and travel. Americans may disagree about the worth and lasting value of travel, but they all are travelers. Some see travel as a sort of salvation:

> With a nearly desperate sense of isolation and a growing suspicion that I lived in an alien land, I took to the open road in search of places where change did not mean ruin and where time and men and deeds connected.[1]

Even for those who find the dream of the open road an empty one, the lure of travel is irresistible:

> So to save my soul and my ass, I did what we Yankee North Americans always ineffectually do, and jumped into a moving vehicle. I hit the road, looking for solace in motion, searching for answers and a little peace through travel and a change of scene—one of the most overrated and unproductive panaceas to come down the Great American Pike.[2]

The second similarity I found in my two very different groups was the desire to participate in the creation of their own worlds. That this creation is extraordinarily difficult and in the nature of a journey is clearly expressed in Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities*, a work I always use to introduce my course on contemporary fiction. *Invisible Cities* is precisely about creative journeys: Kubla Khan's atlas contains all the promised lands visited in thought but not yet discovered or founded. The ruler asks Marco Polo, whom he suspects of having invented all the tales of his travels, which of these futures the winds are driving us toward. Marco Polo answers:

> At times all I need is a brief glimpse, an opening in the midst of an incongruous landscape, a glint of lights in the fog, the dialogue of two passerbys meeting in the crowd, and I will put together, piece by piece, the perfect city, made of fragments, mixed with the rest, of instants separated by intervals, of signals one sends out, not knowing who receives them. If I tell you that the city toward which my journey tends is dicontinuous in space and time, now scattered, now more condensed, you must not believe the search for it can stop. Perhaps while we speak, it is rising, scattered, within the confines of your empire: you can hunt for it, but only in the way I have said.[3]

The English critic and travel writer Jonathan Raban further extends and clarifies the search for the perfect city that Calvino's Marco Polo reveals is primarily an imaginative journey:

> For days I lay stretched out on the floor of my attic room, trying to bring the river to life from its code of print. It was tough going. Often I found Huck's

> American dialect as impenetrable as Latin, but even in the most difficult bits I was kept at it by the persistent wink and glimmer of the river. I was living inside the book. . . . The Mississippi was my best invention: a dream that was always there like a big friendly room with an open door into which I could wander at will. Once inside it, I was at home. I let the river grow around me until the world consisted of nothing except me and that great comfortable gulf of water where catfish rooted and wild fruit hung from the trees on the towhead islands. . . . I didn't dare move a muscle for fear of waking from the dream.[4]

I was as excited as Raban was with his *Huckleberry Finn* reveries. With the convergence of imagination, travel, and literature, I had come full circle to Fussell's illustration of how memory affects personal perception and experience. At this point I realized that literary traveling had discovered me.

The approaches to literary traveling are many. The course can be structured chronologically, thematically, or even rhetorically by style and content. My most successful strategy is to employ a geographical structure wherein students study works, for example, of African travels by authors of different ages and ethnic groups. There is a built-in transitional device in such an approach: after studying Graham Greene's *Journey without Maps* one can move on to a view of the African experience in Western Europe in Tete-Michel Kpomassie's *An African in Greenland*.

A course in literary traveling offers more than flexibility and a new book list. As a topic, literary traveling seems especially well-suited to the academic needs of my community college students. The travel anecdotes they present in their journals are less difficult for them to write than the usual compositions and provide an opportunity to develop their aesthetic sense and a critical understanding and appreciation of literature. Furthermore, the experiential writing that is the major component of their assignments allows me as the instructor to deal directly with the widely divergent writing abilities of my students. I have found that students are much more receptive to considerations of form and expression when the problem of content is no longer a pressing concern.

A second major academic advantage of a literary traveling course is that it provides a convenient and non-threatening transition to more conventional and challenging literary forms. With basic skills polished, interest piqued, and confidence boosted, students are academically and emotionally prepared to tackle such complementary genres as the traditional *bildungsroman* of Dickens and Twain and the contemporary interior journeys on Calvino, Gass, Hawkes, and Sontag. I have even found that works of literary travel can aid in the study of such cult works as Kerouac's *On the Road* and Hesse's *Step-*

penwolf, since both are examples of the quest theme as the search for the self by means of a self-conscious pursuit of the new and adventurous.

Finally, there is a historical and moral component in most literary travel books. A course in literary traveling serves as an introduction to foreign cultures and philosophies with the added benefit of being filtered through the consciousness of someone from the reader's own culture. All literary travel works employ a conscious or buried plea for tolerance among people, a political position that seems especially attractive in this age of heightened tensions and mistrust among nations. The Paris depicted in Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast* has a particular value, and the Sahara offers a sense of the absolute and enduring for an attentive, serious traveler like Paul Bowles:

> Perhaps the logical question to ask is: Why go? The answer is that when a man has been there (Sahara) and undergone the baptism of solitude he can't help himself. Once he has been under the spell of the vast, luminous, silent country, no other place is quite strong enough for him, no other surroundings can provide the supremely satisfying sensation of existing in the midst of something that is absolute. He will go back, whatever the cost in comfort and money, for the absolute has no price.[6]

Literary traveling is a successful course primarily because travel excites memory and imagination and stimulates people to discover what is real to them by comparing and contrasting the ideal and the real. Students respond to other individuals' searches for awareness and truth. Finally, any course that can include such talented and diverse artists as Jan Morris, James Boswell, Lawrence Durrell, V. S. Naipaul, Eric Newby, Jonathan Raban, Paul Theroux, Bruce Chatwin, Graham Greene, John McPhee, William Golding, Ernest Hemingway, and Tobias Smollett cannot fail to be fresh and exciting. I feel quite confident that writers of books of literary travel can be safely added to the catalogue of contemporary guardians of the human tradition, which in itself makes them worthy of inclusion in a college-level course:

> It is still too early to understand the new twentieth-century landscape. We can best rely on the insights of the geographer and the photographer and the philosopher. They are the most trustworthy custodians of the human tradition: for they seek to discover order within randomness, beauty within chaos, and the enduring aspirations of mankind behind blunders and failures.[8]

Notes

[1] William Least Heat Moon, *Blue Highways* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1982), p. 15.

[2] John Nichols, *If Mountains Die: A New Mexico Memoir* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1979), p. 33.

[3] Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1974), p. 164.

[4] Jonathan Raban, *Old Glory* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1981), pp. 12–13.

[5] Paul Bowles, "Baptism of Solitude," *Their Heads Are Green and Their Hands Are Blue* (New York: Ecco Press, 1963), pp. 143–44.

[6] J. B. Jackson, "Landscape as Theater," *The Essential Landscape: The New Mexico Photographic Survey* (Albuquerque, N.M.: University of New Mexico, 1985), p. 84.

Modern China: An Oxymoron

Elnora Rigik, Eugene Slaski, and Margaret D. Williams

China—land of a billion faces; an agricultural society attempting to industrialize; an ancient and imperial country learning to adjust to a Communist hierarchy without the presence of its revolutionary leader, Mao; a nation of bicycles, rice paddies, and the Great Wall. We spent eighteen days there, visited five cities, met a few dozen Chinese, and brought back vivid memories of our trip.

For three weeks in July, a group of thirty-eight community college faculty and administrators visited China on a trip sponsored by the Citizen Ambassador Program of People to People International. The delegation's mission was threefold: (1) exchange information and share expertise with Chinese educators, especially with television university systems and with polytechnics (their version of community colleges); (2) establish an agreement for exchanges between Chinese and American faculty, students, and administrators; and (3) promote cultural and educational cooperation between American community colleges and Chinese polytechnics.

Our intention was to learn more about higher education in China, where less than 8 percent of high school graduates advance to university study, but 99 percent of those graduate. We visited some fifteen institutions of higher learning, and our delegation toured fashion design schools and observed the taping of a TV program on Chinese literature. At Central TV University we saw state-of-the-art TV equipment purchased with a $7 million loan from the World Bank, but there were few technicians with the knowledge to use it effectively. We saw computer labs with handmade cloth covers for the equipment, but without proper ventilating and dehumidifying systems to protect these expensive machines. New high-rise buildings, mostly apartments, broke

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the ancient skyline; construction was everywhere in evidence. The universities we visited were a blend of old structures with new uses (factories converted to classrooms and labs) and new structures made for training future engineers, managers, and scientists.

Let us first give some general impressions of this ancient land. Modern China is at best a contradiction, an oxymoron. The greatness of China is its dynastic past: its Great Wall and its Forbidden City, relics and reminders of an opulent, arrogant age. The power of the Central Committee, the structure of Tiananmen Square (as plain and spacious as the Forbidden City is ornate) and the Great Hall of the People—these images of Communist authority are not as magnificent, the splendor not as great. China is leaving its imperial past for a chance at technological glory; it remains at best in a pre-industrial, nineteenth-century condition, polluted and congested.

It has teeming cities, Beijing at 10 million, Shanghai at 13 million (with an average living space of twelve square feet per person), Tianjin at 8 million, Guangzhou at 6 million, and to make life yet more challenging, the total population exceeds 1 billion. A huge red banner with bright yellow Chinese characters greets all visitors to the Beijing International Airport and reads, "Do all you can to keep China below 1.2 billion by the year 2000." To do otherwise—that is, to have more than one child since the 1978 policy limiting family size—is to risk job, medical care, residence, and educational opportunity.

With a woeful lack of resources, a population essentially unschooled and untrained, and universities with an overstaffed, undereducated team of professionals, China's future as a modern state is unclear. Yet China is surrounded by powerful adversaries in the Soviet Union, South Korea, Japan, Vietnam, and India; the People's Republic cannot stand still.

Given such challenges, China is going through what other modern states have already experienced. To visit China today is to visit scenes of industrially polluted rivers, streams, and urban skies; the smog over Shanghai is oppressive; the pungent odor of the Souzhou Creek of Shanghai biting, nauseating. Urban slums are the primary feature at China's modernity, while the rural areas still present *National Geographic*-like scenes of water buffalo and rice paddies. The crush of the population of the cities is overwhelming. Circular walkways connecting all four street corners are built above street level to permit vehicular and bicycle traffic to move freely. Bike ramps exit from highway systems (some 5 million bikes in the capital alone move people and products of all kinds and sizes throughout the city). And apartment com-

plexes rise throughout China's cities, while millions live in hovels with the rats or on boats with the stench.

Perhaps the most visible characteristic of life in China, visible but easily missed, is the lack of privacy. A forty-year-old driver who remembered the Cultural Revolution reminded us of this as we traveled in an air-conditioned mini-bus provided by the State Commission of Education. He made it clear that block leaders know the daily activities of each resident—what they eat, their work habits, sexual activities, physical and mental state, and their visitors. Freedom does not exist. Work takes up ten or twelve hours a day, six days a week; on the seventh day the workers pause, seek out a piece of space, and rest. Life is harsh, food poisoning due to lack of refrigeration and pasteurization is common, and the life expectancy is only sixty-two. Charles Dickens wrote of similar conditions over a century ago, yet nineteenth-century England was quite different from modern China. China's enormous population is one such difference, and communism is another.

The workings of the Communist state are worth considering. In Harbin (Manchuria) we visited a Children's Park. In this garden setting, the children of the local schools operate a park railroad. Those children with the best academic records perform the most prestigious tasks for the railroad, acting as engineer, conductor, and ticket-taker, for example. As we boarded the train, a petite young student translated, in impeccable English, the welcome offered by an older member of this group of honor students. Our delegation was impressed by the young girl's flawless use of the language. The only Chinese-American in our group later sought the girl out only to discover that she could speak no other English—she had memorized the words we had heard her recite. All these children were members of the Young Pioneers, a Communist youth group. They were all doing their part for the state.

Another high spot on our trip was a concert in Harbin. The speakers used were gigantic, the type used by American rock bands, and the sound was ear-splitting. But the music ranged from traditional Chinese numbers to an English version of "By the Waters of Babylon" to a performance by one of the top pop stars in China, who looked and moved and sang like a professional American entertainer.

In Shanghai, we were taken to a fashion show at a silk factory. The models were stunning, the clothes magnificent, and the show well-choreographed and lighted. But we found it depressing, for the legs of the models were covered with insect bites, their shoes were nearly falling apart, and we knew that

these women would never be able to afford the clothes they modeled, nor would their lives ever offer them an opportunity to wear them.

Cleanliness of buildings seems not to be important, but the streets in Chinese cities are kept clean by a fleet of older women with rice-straw brooms. These women wear traditional Chinese garb, with the pointed hats Westerners expect to see. Clothes are also kept clean, but because of lack of space, laundry poles jut out from every apartment and overhang the street, especially in Shanghai.

In Guangzhou (Canton), the most glaring contrast was between the accommodations for foreign tourists and the living conditions of the native population. We stayed at the White Swan Hotel, which is more luxurious than most in the United States. The hotel was on the Pearl River, south China's major shipping lane. From our room on the twentieth floor, we could see the hotel complex with its two swimming pools abut the filthy brown water of the river. And at the Sheraton in Guangzhou, native Chinese are not allowed inside unless accompanied by a Westerner.

All three of us were privileged to be invited to visit in Chinese homes. Gene Slaski was a guest of the president of the Party School of Beijing. His account:

After some twenty minutes of driving through the streets of Beijing, we entered the grounds of the Party Cadre Training University where my interview would be conducted. President Chen Wei-Ren was waiting for me as we entered the driveway to his modest home, an apartment attached to a building of the school. He had an interpreter with him, and from time to time, members of his family would walk through the living room/kitchen area where we discussed various matters of particular interest to me.

The conversation was clearly a casual one. President Chen was a gracious host and appeared genuinely interested in answering my questions, and my trepidations about meeting with a Communist bureaucrat soon disappeared. He was not wearing a Mao cap, carried no little red book, and never once quoted Mao. He was a thin, short, and gentle man in his early sixties. He was a father, a grandfather, and the president of the Party School of Beijing, the most prestigious training institute for college graduates who need or desire advanced post-graduate training in the specialized curricula of his institute.

I had to listen very carefully to the words of the translator, whose English was good but who spoke more rapidly than I had hoped. The president helped by

offering me a variety of beverages while we got acquainted: tea from his native province of Henan, the obligatory orange pop, and mineral water. He offered no "snacks"; instead he invited me to have lunch with his family, an invitation I reluctantly declined because I was due to meet the delegation at a restaurant over an hour away.

Chen and I chatted for about ninety minutes. Initially the conversation focused on the institute he directed. The 1,500 students there take courses on political and economic theory and Marxist and comparative ideology. These courses are designed to prepare the party cadres for greater responsibilities within the Communist party hierarchy. Students attend for two to three months, six months, and at times for one to three years. Chen indicated that a three-year stay is common for the National Minorities students amongst them cadres from Tibet and Xinjiang provinces. Some 600 faculty and researchers direct the students' studies, a ratio of 3 to 1. Many aging faculty linger on while the student population remains far short of its potential due to the ridicule and scorn that educators and students endured during the Cultural Revolution, when Maoist forces closed universities and sent faculty and students alike to work alongside the peasants in the villages and communes of rural China.

Because of the fanaticism of that revolution, education in China was set back decades. Faculty are poorly trained, and only some 5 to 8 percent of high school graduates go on to receive a college education. At Chen's school the situation is more drastic since his students are college graduates. He is dealing with a small pool of students and there is only a handful of staff members with earned master's and doctoral degrees; the vast majority of faculty have bachelor's degrees only, if that. Yet these individuals are to prepare middle- and upper-management cadres for a future of leadership. Chen also acknowledged that the school is currently running below capacity because the facilities need repairs; even at that, only 300 more students could be handled.

Elnora and Margie were also guests in a Chinese home. Elnora's recollections:

Our hostess, Madame Huang Xiao Feng, her husband, Professor Li Zhong Lin, and their colleague Madame Cho Shou Li (Shirley) all teach at the Guangdong Institute of Technology in Guangzhou. Madame Huang and her husband both teach chemistry. Shirley teaches English.

Since the Huangs are both full professors, they have a three-bedroom apartment, surely a luxury. The walls of the apartment were almost entirely bare

with the exception of a calendar. The furniture, too, was sparse. Madame Huang has both a refrigerator and a washing machine, which are in the living room. Between the rooms were lovely embroidered hangings serving as doors. The bedrooms had beds covered with straw mats, and the master bedroom had a whole case of books, which are considered rare commodities.

The afternoon's talk, facilitated by the excellent English that Shirley speaks, was mostly about our families, our countries, and our work. There was a lively exchange of photos. Madame Huang brought out a family photo album, and we talked about various family members. Because only Madame Huang teaches chemistry and the others of us teach English, most professional discussion was about teaching English.

Higher education is in the early stages of a transformation since the death of Mao a decade ago. Like much else in China today, Deng Xiao Ping's desire to modernize the Communist state, even at the price of opening up to the West and to capitalism, has had its positive effects on education in China. By 1990, all schooling through the ninth grade will be compulsory; by the year 2000 China hopes all urban areas will have compulsory education through the twelfth grade.

Although English is a second language, the Chinese now boast more English-speaking citizens than the United States. Yet most high school graduates cannot hope to continue their education; the majority will be trained for vocational, technical, or managerial jobs, while an elite minority earn college degrees and (as graduate students only) study abroad.

No one over the age of forty can expect to receive a college degree in China; if a couple has had more than one child since 1978, none of the family can go to college. In a population of over a billion, such restrictions are seen as necessary. One can argue that the future cost of such prohibitions will prove high, but the cost of educating hundreds of millions of Chinese youth is also formidable.

Pre-school education is important because, despite the formal policy of one-child families, in 1985 China had 14.8 million children in kindergarten. In a sweeping reform of education in 1985, the government mandated nine years of compulsory education: primary school for six years and junior secondary for three. In 1984, more than 130 million children were in primary school. Moral education is a major emphasis in primary school. A publication of the State Education Commission notes that students "are taught to love the country, love the people, love labor, love science, love socialism, study hard, love

the collective, love public property, observe discipline, be polite, be honest and modest, be brave and lively and be diligent and frugal." In addition to moral education, Chinese primary students learn at least 3,000 Chinese characters, arithmetic and natural science, which includes physics, chemistry, astronomy, geography, biology, and hygiene.

Secondary education is of two types. Junior secondary school (what we would call junior high) is part of the nine years of compulsory education. Senior secondary school includes senior high school, vocational school, technical school, normal school, and agricultural school. In 1985 there were 93,200 secondary schools, with more than 47 million students. Nevertheless, in rural areas many students still do not attend secondary school.

The Cultural Revolution put a stop to vocational education, but by 1985, 36 percent of secondary school students were in agricultural, vocational, or technical schools. Secondary school students study politics and ideology, Chinese, mathematics, a foreign language, physics, chemistry, history, geography, biology, hygiene and physiology, physical education, music, fine arts, and job training. In 1985, 46 percent of junior high school graduates were admitted to senior high schools, and 31.5 percent of high school graduates entered institutions of higher education of some sort.

Like the other types of schools, colleges and universities are sponsored by various levels of government as well as by factories and departments. In 1985, there were 1,016 institutions of higher learning in China, 574 universities and colleges, 324 training schools, and 118 short-term vocational colleges.

Only the very bright can enter regular universities. Those who do are chosen by a national unified examination, which is given for three days in July in locations throughout the country. The exam covers the arts, Chinese and a foreign language, mathematics, geography, science, and political education. Only a very small percentage are accepted because of the lack of space and financial resources, but those who are chosen pay no tuition. Graduation from the university guarantees the student a job, and these graduates form the elite of the Chinese system. As a result, pressure is extremely high for students to pass the exam.

Those who do not gain entrance to the universities may take an exam for training school, or they may seek employment, which is provided by the state in areas where workers are needed. Chinese workers do not have a choice as to their employment or their residence. After five years of exemplary work,

they may be recommended for admission to a short-term college for further training. A worker cannot decide to change occupations; training is given only in the field of current employment, for the work unit pays the fees.

In 1985, there were just over 60,000 students in training colleges, 79,000 in special courses for bureaucrats, some 11,000 in teacher-training programs, and nearly 33,000 in short-term colleges whose graduates would not be provided employment by the government.

Adult education (an adult is defined as being between twenty-five and forty) is being rapidly expanded. Adults may study in radio and TV universities, peasant colleges, teacher-training schools, administrative schools for bureaucrats, or staff higher education schools. Retired workers (women over fifty-five and men over sixty) may take classes for their own pleasure, but there is no provision for education for people between forty and retirement age.

The World Bank has entered an agreement to provide China with more than $206 million to expand educational opportunities and to train the middle managers and technicians needed if the country is to come close to meeting its goal of modernization in agriculture, industry, defense, and science and technology. The types of institutions being aided are polytechnics and TV universities.

Polytechnics are the Chinese counterpart of American community colleges. They are two- or three-year colleges designed to meet local demands for trained technicians. The plan calls for about 100 polytechnics by 1990. Graduates of these schools are not guaranteed jobs by the government; students do not live on campus, and they must pay a modest tuition. The curriculum is more practical and less theoretical than at regular universities. In 1981, there were only 7,000 students enrolled in the ten polytechnics, but by 1990, polytechnics, aided by the World Bank project, will enroll 45,000 in seventeen such colleges.

A unique type of adult education sponsored by the World Bank is the TV university. The idea of such a university in a country as gigantic as China is brilliant. Professors from China's top universities videotape their lectures, which are then broadcast throughout the country. In addition to the Central TV University in Beijing, there are twenty-eight TV universities, with 540 branches, where students assemble to watch the tapes and receive tutoring and/or coaching as well as to get assignments and take exams. In the provinces there are also 1,400 work stations, and some 30,000 classes are offered through them. Unfortunately, because of a lack of trained technicians, much

of the state-of-the-art equipment is under-used. However, Central TV University in Beijing has produced over 200 programs, and last year over a million students took English over TV. The World Bank project calls for enrollment to jump to more than 2 million by 1990. To enter a degree program through TVU, students must also take an entrance exam.

Like education in the United States, Chinese education also faces many problems. Among them are that state control remains too tight; there is a limited range of subjects taught, with a glaring need for more students to study liberal arts; a tremendous shortage of qualified teachers exists; and limited space in traditional universities keeps many qualified students out of the system.

In spite of the problems, however, China has made giant strides in providing education for its huge population. Prior to 1949, when the Communists took over, only one in five Chinese had any education and the illiteracy rate was 80 percent. Now that rate has dropped to just over 20 percent (about the same as in the United States), and millions more people are being educated at some level. But China is not modern yet. Its future depends greatly on internal party stability, continued external support, and peaceful borders. Within a decade, China will re-establish political control over Hong Kong, the capitalist mecca just south of Guangzhou. What China does with Hong Kong will tell us much about China's own future and that of the tiny island of Taiwan as well. China is old, but China is experimenting; if the Chinese allow the change to continue, the results could easily affect the whole world.

Learning To Be Human: Confucian Resources for Rethinking General Education

Fran Conroy

> From the very poorest upwards—beginning even with the man who could bring no better present than a bundle of dried flesh—none has ever come to me without receiving instruction.
>
> —Confucius, *Analects*, 7:7[1]

> Only one who bursts with eagerness do I instruct; only one who bubbles with excitement do I enlighten. If I hold up one corner and a person cannot come back with the other three, I do not continue the lesson.
>
> —*Analects*, 7:8[2]

The distant goal of higher education is out of joint. The traditionally central position in the college curriculum of genuinely liberal learning, learning to be human,[3] what Confucians call *ta hsueh*[4] (great or adult learning) has been precariously eroded.

Although this is true to some degree throughout higher education, it is especially true in the growing non-elite sector. In fact, the erosion has occurred gradually over the same time period that higher education has been significantly democratized, roughly during the two decades since the late 1960s when the community college movement doubled the number of students who go to college. Most of these students are non-traditional, from the working class, minority, and adult populations which did not previously send many students to college. But they have not gotten what they were promised: the "college" they can go to today is not "college" in the fuller sense of the elite colleges of a quarter-century ago. The vital tension at the heart of the college experience—the classical tension between "learning for a position" on the one hand and "learning to be human" on the other—has largely collapsed. Instrumentalism has become the untempered, uncounterbalanced ethos. It

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rules from the student's first meeting with the college counselor to the last pre-career course and has co-opted the most visible vestige of the older notion of college, the liberal arts general education core, along the way.

Although this trend in education can assuredly be connected to broader societal forces that are producing a pool of incoming students who are already bred on instrumentalist and individualist ways of thinking—the topic of lengthier studies such as Robert N. Bellah *et al.*'s *Habits of the Heart*[5]—in this essay I will limit my discussion to what might still be done with these students once they arrive at college. That is, recognizing the constraints of the situation for us as educators in non-elite colleges, what can we do to reconstruct the pole that, traditionally, should be pulling students as much toward their humanness as the other pole does to their career concerns? My hypothesis is that teachers can intervene to re-instill the element of learning to be human into the freshman and sophomore years, but that this process must begin with re-educating ourselves. For we have become part of the problem; our sense of the distant goal is in need of rethinking in the same way that our students' is.[6]

To find resources for revitalizing faculty, I propose that we turn to the most sustained, brilliant, and open-ended conversation on the problem of becoming human among all the world's cultures: the Confucian tradition of east Asia. In particular, one strand within Confucianism,[7] the strand extending from the fourth-century-B.C. philosopher Mencius to the sixteenth-century Neo-Confucianist Wang Yang-ming to the twentieth-century reformer Liang Shu-ming[8] is especially relevant for non-elite education. These men paid special attention to the concerns of the common people. I will turn to their concepts, models, and experiences—as well as to the penetrating current interpretations of Confucianism by Harvard philosopher Wei-ming Tu—after first establishing more clearly the American educational problem that I mean to address.

The Problem

Our Students

While it is to be expected that most students who attend non-elite colleges will lack the intellectual edge of their peers at Princeton or Rutgers, intellectual deficiency is often not the worst problem for the contemporary non-elite college, which is used to providing remediation. A deeper problem is the students' attitude toward learning. Having sadly wasted their minds during their high school years, too many, even after making the decision to go to

college, lack the attitudinal qualities appropriate for someone whose human potential—intellectually, morally, aesthetically, and spiritually—is so strikingly underdeveloped.

To put it bluntly, too many of our students lack humility, deference, respect, or any openness to self-transformation, growth, or change. Too many are baldly and unquestioningly pragmatic, careerist, consumerist, and success-seeking, with narrow conceptions of self-interest. (The Confucian tradition would say they have little sense of their *jen*, or human-ness.[9]) Too many want rote, mechanical learning; will drop courses that demand critical thinking and writing; are more comfortable in a world of objective tests, behavioral objectives, and precise student-teacher contracts about grades. Too many are drawn to the superficial, in both themselves and their professors: the gimmick, the simple answer, the "little knowledge" that is proverbially "worse than none." Too many are "getting their studies over with" and consider their private lives to be their "real" lives.

While this is a profile of many students in the least elite colleges, it is also indicative of trends up through the spectrum of colleges and universities. Allan Bloom has noted that students at the top twenty to thirty colleges are more like the masses in their tastes and attitudes than they used to be.[10] Community college educators Martin Spear and Dennis McGrath have explored the creeping "remedialization" of higher education, from the bottom up. *I.e.*, because the conception of education held by the remedial student is also increasingly held by the non-remedial student, there is a tendency in higher education to respond by "renegotiating downward" the "norms of literate activity."[11] Moreover, recent surveys by the American Council on Education have found that college freshmen nationally choose "being well-off financially" twice as often as "developing a meaningful philosophy of life" as their goal, almost the reverse of the results in 1970.[12]

We Educators

After such a bleak portrait of our students, one might expect community college faculty to be engaged in a constant tug-of-war with them about the very definition of education. This seems rarely to be the case, however. Too many community college educators have become reshaped in their students' images: they have become "consumer-responsive," and the administrative bureaucracy has encouraged them in this. The result is that the dominant pedagogy of the community college actually reinforces many of the student attitudes described above. The faculty and counselors provide a kind of final confirmation and solidification of students' incoming predispositions to take

education as a certification process involving consumption of course units, information transfer, memorization skills, and objective-test performance.

Researchers Richardson, Fisk, and Okun, for example, have found that the community college approach to English encourages a fragmented and limited language use that they call "bitting" instead of "texting."[13] Spear and McGrath note that "the appearance of large numbers of underprepared students in the classrooms of traditional academic disciplines has led traditional academics more and more to mimic the practices and vocabulary of remedial/developmental programs."[14] George Cronk has found that at his and other community colleges most liberal arts faculty use "textbooks, not real books," "have little discussion, almost all lecture," "have given up bibliographies," and "put too much emphasis on objective testing and too little emphasis on methodology and critical thinking."[15]

I have found that the community college pedagogy of narrowly conceived behavioral objectives—a system borrowed from management in which one breaks down all learning into small, discrete units, each with its own "intended outcome," "learning activity," and "rationale"—while perhaps useful in science and business, has eroded the "learning to be human" pole in the humanities and social sciences while strengthening the instrumentalist pole, thereby fitting liberal arts all too comfortably into a universe of calculations and careers.

Ends

> Things have their roots and branches. Affairs have their end and beginning. To know what is first and what is last will lead near to what is taught in the *Great Learning*.
>
> —Confucius, *Ta Hsueh*, 3[16]

By the way we teach, by our pedagogy, what are we signaling to our students that we hold as the "end," the distant goal, of higher education? I would argue that in the contemporary non-elite college the goal is, implicitly but unambiguously, exactly the one most painstakingly rejected by all the great religio-philosophies, from Plato and the Christian Fathers to Confucius: money and status.

For the community college student, often reinforced by teachers and counselors, the "end" of learning is performance on the test. Beyond this there is, increasingly, performance on a state test, *e.g.*, New Jersey's proposed new "rising juniors" exam; there is the attainment of the desired career; and ultimately there is money and status—a "life-style" built around the products

that symbolize success and happiness in every television advertisement and soap opera.

The universal classical response to such a conception of ends is that it leads to cultural collapse, a kind of human suicide. Confucius, like many great Western thinkers, invariably answers questions about how to get a good job with exhortations to do what is right, pursue the "human" way (the root), and "career" (the branch) will follow. But the root neglected and the branch thriving? This has never been the case, he adds.[17] It is to Confucius's thought that we now turn.

Confucian Resources

The Tradition

Confucianism is best understood as not a doctrine but a process, a continuing conversation and practice, whose highest aim is the realization of what it is to be human. Confucius himself (551–479 B.C.), an itinerant teacher and occasionally minor official from the state of Lu, was not himself the originator of "Confucianism"; it is therefore more accurately referred to as the "*Ju* (Scholars, Classicists) School." Confucius was a "transmitter and not a maker."[18] What he transmitted was the learning and history of the golden age at the beginning of the Chou dynasty (c. 1000 B.C.) and before, when the emperors and ministers who held political power were also enlightened in ethico-religious matters, *i.e.*, understood how humans could become completers of the cosmic design. Confucius inquired into everything, learned without satiety, loved the ancients,[19] relished traditional ceremonies,[20] and tried to "reanimate the old to discover the new."[21] He was not wealthy and advised against pursuing profit; he forgot to eat when enthusiastic about his inquiries[22]; and he taught others tirelessly.[23] He would teach rich or poor, but no one who was not "bursting with eagerness" to learn to be human.[24]

In his teaching, Confucius emphasized several concepts and models concerning becoming human that became central to discussions first in China and then in all east Asia, and that have proved inexhaustible for literally 1,000 generations. His words were often fruitfully ambiguous, in a way that mirrors the ambiguity of human life. He was suggestive rather than prescriptive. He often tried to steer students between two poles to find the subtle and precarious "human way."

My approach will be to review some of his central ideas, emphasizing those that have a special applicability to rethinking ends in non-elite education. In

so doing I will be arguing for the Mencius–Wang Yang-ming line of interpretation of Confucius's thoughts.

First among Confucius's concepts is *jen*, humanity or humanness, the central virtue in humans. *Jen* is composed of the Chinese character for "person" and the character for "two." (It can also be seen as a representation of "the full measure of a person," *i.e.*, from head to toe.) The "two" is crucial, for it is symbolic here of the Confucian conviction that humans are irreducibly social. We cannot become human all by ourselves. Therefore, the enterprise of learning to be human for Confucius is a communal enterprise, involving how to relate to others in ways that manifest *shu*, reciprocity or reciprocal obligation. The "root" of *jen* is *hsiao*, filial piety, how children should relate to parents.[25] The capacity for *jen* is inherent in all of us; it is part of our nature, what Heaven has endowed. But it does not automatically grow: it needs to be nurtured by *chiao*, instruction. The human capacity for becoming *jen*, or even *sheng* (sage) varies. *Min* (the people) designates human beings as masses; *min* can be led toward virtue but are not considered capable of authoring their own growth.[26]

The distinction between *jen* and *min*, we might pause to note, could be crucial for how we teach at the non-elite college. Which characterizes our students? Is the difference one of socio-economic class, intellectual aptitude, or something else? Hall and Ames give us a clue in their recent painstaking search of the Confucian literature on this question: for Confucius, "being a person is something one does, not something one is," they conclude.[27]

Second among Confucius's central concepts is *li*, ritual action or ceremony. The most valuable recent treatment of *li* is Fingarette's *Confucius: the Secular as Sacred*,[28] in which he argues that *li* is the ethico-cosmic pattern of human conduct by which one becomes *jen*. Involving actions as ordinary as a nod to a passerby and as deep as the rites when a parent dies, *li* is the great dance of life, the accumulated treasure of intelligent conventions, the human way to live. Confucius taught *li* as in creative tension with *ho*, natural ease, which signifies the genuine, the flowing, the spirit as opposed to the letter of an action.[29] To have both outward form and natural ease is the highest excellence (like a piano player who at last makes the qualitative leap from simply accurate technique to true musicality). This distinction is one illustration of the considerable attention in Confucianism to the compliance of inner and outer, the real coin and the false coin. The inner, hinted at by *ho* here, is developed more profoundly in the concept of *ch'eng*, utmost sincerity or authenticity, in the classic called *Chung Yung* (*Doctrine of the Mean*).[30] The outer, signified by *li*, is an indication that Confucianism is not merely an

ethics, as some have held, but even more an "aesthetics" of life, as Hall and Ames have proposed.[31] Confucius grasped that there is something beautiful in appropriate rituals, which signify dignity as well as tenderness.

Finally, there are three very famous opening statements in the *Lun Yu* (*Analects*, or *Conversations*), *Ta Hsueh* (*Great Learning*), and *Chung Yung* that the reader should be familiar with. The *Lun Yu* begins:

> [Confucius] said, To learn with constant perseverance and application: is it not a pleasure? To have friends coming from distant places: is it not delightful? To remain unsoured even though one's merit goes unrecognized: isn't it the mark of a superior person?[32]

The third sentence synthesizes the opening two and introduces a central tension in the next 2,500 years of Confucian tradition: recognition is in one sense indispensable to give one an arena in which to practice one's learning; yet it is precisely such recognition that cannot become one's end, for such an end undermines the learning itself. The *Ta Hsueh* opens: "What the Great Learning teaches is to manifest shining virtue, to renovate the people, and to rest in the highest Good."[33] What makes some people's virtue shine, others' oppressive? What policies can "renovate" the people? How do we know "the highest Good"? Again, these lines have led to a 2,500-year conversation. Finally, the *Chung Yung* opens:

> What Heaven imparts to man is called human nature. To follow human nature is called the Way. Cultivating the Way is called teaching.... There is nothing more visible than what is hidden and nothing more manifest than what is subtle.[34]

Again, 1,000 generations have discussed the meaning of "Heaven," "nature," "the Way," and the "hidden."

Mencius

Mencius (c. 371–289 B.C.), a student of Confucius's grandson's student, edged Confucian teachings in a non-elitist direction. He stressed that all humans have hearts-and-minds (the two words are the same in Chinese) that are intrinsically good, unable to bear the suffering of others. Therefore, uncovering what is already there becomes the main work, leading toward sagehood.[35] Book learning, though not dispensable, is less important for Mencius than self-effort toward regaining own's "child-like" heart.[36] The problem is usually that one's "great self" (humane, vast) becomes submerged in one's "small self" (narrow, calculating). To reverse the development, one needs to open oneself to an "ever-expanding circle of human relatedness" (in Tu's phrase[37]), *i.e.*, to family, friends, community, country, "all under

Heaven."[38] What usually holds people back is not so much *pu neng* (inability) as *pu wei* (unwillingness). The student has to be willing to become a "total person in transformation."[39] Further indications of Mencius's anti-elitism were his suspicion of bookish village "goody-goodies"[40] and his famous doctrine that the best way to find the elusive "will of Heaven" is to look in the "will of the people."[41]

Wang Yang-ming

Wang Yang-ming (1472-1529) recovered and developed further the non-elitist implications and existential meaning of the Mencian line of Confucianism after an 1,800-year lapse. Three centuries earlier, the founder of orthodox Neo-Confucianism, Chu Hsi, had restored the "learning of the sages" to prominence after a period of heavy Buddhist influence.[42] Yet Chu's approach stressed book learning, which Chu's successors built into a universal Confucian civil-service examination system. The Confucian orthodox establishment came to favor the gentry, who could spend many years in study. Wang Yang-ming early in life became an opponent of "studying for the examination" (even though he passed). He found that it violated the essence of Confucius's and Mencius's teaching. Though he did not advocate dispensing with books altogether (no Confucian ever could; the great books are considered part of the context), he advocated first-hand experience of what the classics were talking about—Heaven's voice, shining virtue, human-ness—as more essential than book learning. And he advocated great reforms in the examinations, to reflect genuine learning and practical application, not rote memory and formalism. Under Wang's influence, Wei-ming Tu writes, "the Confucian way could no longer be considered to be a privileged avenue of the literatus."[43]

Yang-ming, born Wang Shou-jen, was initially attracted to Buddhism and Taoism, but he was struck during a meditative session in Yang-ming (Sun-like Brightness) Grotto by the unnaturalness of severing bonds to parents and grandparents. Reaffirming the "irreducibility of human-relatedness,"[44] he returned to civilization and took an official post, but with a determination not to lose his *jen* in the midst of the corruption rampant in the imperial court. One day, Wang filed an official memo ("memorial") to the emperor suggesting that an evil eunuch be dismissed from his high position. This got Wang forty lashes and banishment to a remote southwestern region inhabited by venomous snakes and uncultured, hostile minorities (the Miao and Lolo tribes). Here, in the town of Lung-ch'ang, he faced the ultimate dilemma implied by the opening lines of the *Analects:* in Tu's words, "What should a

Confucian do if he had been deprived of the environment that is usually thought to be essential to Confucian practices?"[45]

After weeks of hardship and near despair, Wang, who had been shunned by the local people, was awakened by a voice in the middle of the night that told him, in effect, that one could achieve sagehood anywhere. Soon after this famous "sudden enlightenment," Wang became "better acquainted with [the minority people] and they, day by day, showed an increasing attachment toward him. They considered his hovel to be distressing and damp and set to felling trees to build him a number of buildings, such as Lung-Kang Academy, a reception hall, a study, a pavilion, and a den."[46] He gave each an auspicious name: the reception hall became Pin-Yang (receiving the sun); the study, Ho-lou (what rudeness?) from the following passage in the *Analects:* "The Master was wishing to go and live among the nine wild tribes of the East. Someone said, 'They are rude. How can you do such a thing?' The Master said, 'If a gentleman dwelt among them, what rudeness would there be?'"[47] An official from the district education commission soon visited these new non-elite institutions and commented, "The teaching of the sages is being revived today."[48]

Taking advantage of his distance from the bureaucratic, career-driven academic scene back home, Wang's thrust was to build a more genuine Confucian fellowship that was also integrated with the common people's lives. He regularly confronted those students whose "sole aim was 'success' via the examination system."[49] Wang's pedagogy was based on four points: *li-chih, ch'in-hsueh, kai-kuo,* and *tse-shan. Li-chih* means "fix the determination, or resolve": students had to decide they wanted to realize their humanity before Wang would teach them. *Ch'in hsueh* means "diligent study." For Wang, this included not only the transmission of knowledge but also the transformation of personality; he considered "knowing and acting" inseparable. *Kai-kuo* means "reforming one's errors," and carries (in Tu's words) "a similar psychological weight to repentance."[50] *Tse-shan* means "inciting to the Good" and refers to the Aristotelian kind of friendship that developed among students and teachers in Wang's academy, in which "the subtle art of exhortation" was practiced, an art requiring "not only sincerity but gentleness."[51]

Wang Yang-ming did not confine his teaching to a classroom setting. His pedagogical concepts of *chiang hsi* (learning and practicing) and *hsiang yueh* (village covenant) involved personal guidance, teaching by example, and reshaping local socio-economic institutions. "He conducted his tutoring at

banquets, during picnics, in the fields, and even on a walk by moonlight," Tu reports.[62]

In the greatly changed historical context of the revolutionary twentieth century, Liang Shu-ming (b. 1893) attempted to renew some of Wang Yang-ming's concepts, especially the idea of reanimating Confucianism through alternative institutions in a rural setting. Convinced that the early discovery in Chinese civilization of human-ness and harmony were rooted in the direct grasp of the principle of the universe itself through "natural reason" (*li-hsing*[63]), Liang abandoned a professorship at Beijing University to found a rural "*li-hsing* civilization" in Confucius's home province of Shantung. Western modernism, Liang argued, offered technological benefits, but fostered calculation, selfishness, and conflict; it needed to be subsumed under *jen*. He sought a "re-creation of philosophical discourse [*chiang-hsueh*] like that of the Sung and Ming [dynasties] using the [way of] life [and relationship] of Confucius and Yen [Hui, Confucius's favorite disciple]" as a model,[64] but he also wanted it to be fully integrated with peasant life, away from the urban "sinks" of acquisitiveness and corruption. The major institution would be the *hsiang-nung-hsueh-hsiao*, a peasant-intellectual school that would serve the combined functions of learning center, village administrative center, and tea house. The concept further developed Wang Yang-ming's *hsiang yueh*, or village covenant. The curriculum was built around moral study, music, and ritual, but also included literacy, agriculture, public health, cooperative organizational structure, civics, and world affairs.[65]

Later, Liang discovered that Mao Tse-tung was attempting a strikingly similar reconstruction in the northwest, and for the next four decades the "conservative" Liang would attempt to prevail on his Communist friend Mao to give a more Confucian cast to the People's Republic.

Tu Wei-ming

Tu is important as an interpreter of Confucius, Mencius, and Wang, but he has also developed insights of his own, particularly by asking the ancient tradition very contemporary questions. For one thing, it is from Tu that I have borrowed the expression "learning to be human," a phrase that helps to make the Mencian project understandable to Americans. Tu has broken down this phrase, in Chinese *hsueh tso jen*, into three components: becoming "aesthetically refined, morally excellent, and spiritually profound."[66]

Perhaps Tu's most important contribution to "reanimating the old to discover the new" is his relating Confucian learning to the contemporary American preoccupation with "self." A few years ago, Robert N. Bellah asked Tu to

clarify the Confucian idea of "self," and Tu's *Confucian Thought: Selfhood as Creative Transformation* is his answer, the kernal of which is this: Confucian learning is "for the sake of oneself," but that self "is neither subjectivistic nor individualistic."[57] The Confucian self is a "dynamic center of relationships," a "path to human community," and a "dynamic process of spiritual development."[58]

Appropriating Confucian Categories

What can we appropriate from Confucian concepts, principles, and models to revitalize our pedagogy in non-elite colleges?

Learning To Be Human

I believe we need to re-establish something close to the Confucian notion of "learning to be human" as the essence of liberal arts general education. This would involve not eliminating "career learning" but re-establishing the Confucian tension between "career learning" and "human learning." To begin with, the words in institutional mission statements and liberal arts divisional statements, which often ignore this tension, need to be rectified; then, even more important, the actions of faculty need to be changed accordingly. This will take a sustained, deep-reaching program of faculty development built around nutritive, traditional texts, including, perhaps, such works as Tu's *Confucian Thought* and Fingarette's *Confucius*.

With Mencius, Wang, Liang, and Tu, we need to affirm that non-elite students, too, can be *jen*, not merely *min*. We need to affim that learning whose end is authentic, benevolent, socially conscious persons is appropriate not only at the Princetons but also at the hundreds of American versions of Lung-ch'ang. Like Wang, non-elite college faculty need not be "soured" because they have been deprived of an environment in which to practice true *ta hsueh*—just challenged, as Wang was, to make a difference between civilization and its opposite.

We need to provide our students with a learning they can do "without satiety," a learning rooted in tradition that involves them as "total persons in transformation." Our classrooms need to come alive with *chiang hsi*, conversations and applications.

Because of the institutional constraints we all face, we may want to begin this educational transformation in small pilot groups team-taught by like-minded

humanist faculty. Crucial to the success of these groups will be faculty development in which a genuine renegotiation of pedagogical norms takes place. A model for this at Burlington County College (N.J.) will follow this section.

If students ought not to be eliminated from learning to be human by their socio-economic class, and also not by low scores on tests of intellect (*e.g.*, SATs), is there any basis on which to eliminate anybody? Yes, I would suggest that Wang Yang-ming's criteria of *li-chih*, or resolve, be adopted. Those students who, after an initial introduction to what *ta hsueh* is all about show signs of "fixing their determination" on becoming human should be retained; those who are fast asleep or contemptuous should be let go. As Wang put it, "Absence of *chih* is why so many students idle away time and energy."[59]

Practically, this would mean that "open admissions" and remediation efforts should continue. However, remedial programs would need to be redesigned to prepare the students with *chih* for later *ta hsueh*. This might suggest an emphasis on, instead of formalistic "skills" or trivial "personal experience essays," submersion in traditional pre-college reading, the kind appropriate for ages twelve to eighteen that can become the basis of later reflection.[60]

Componenents of a Confucian-Inspired Pedagogy

The Affective Component

Spear and McGrath have proposed three components of a liberal arts core pedagogy, which they use in their interdisciplinary pre-transfer programs at the Community College of Philadelphia: the affective, the cognitive (or intellectual), and the repertoire.[61] Although these are hardly Confucian categories, I propose to use them here as an ordering device to see where Confucian resources might fit in.

The affective, or "feelings" component would, from the Confucian point of view, be the most important of the three. I propose breaking down the affective into the same three dimensions Tu Wei-ming uses to describe learning to be human: aesthetic, moral, and religious. The Confucian term to appropriate for the aesthetic dimensions of learning is *li*, ceremony or propriety, in creative tension with *ho*, natural ease. Ceremony befitting the educational purpose needs to be restored to the non-elite classroom; but it should be introduced with attention to making it natural, rather than artificial.

Aesthetic Dimensions. The beauty can begin in simple things such as the setting. Ideally, of course, this might be a bookshelf-lined seminar room with a large, oval oak table and windows looking out on a glen. More realistically,

if the physical setting can be transformed in small ways to make it more conducive to "the human," the attempt itself can be sufficient. A plant, a landscape painting—or an inscription like Wang Yang-ming's "Receiving the Sun" or "What Rudeness?"—can, with imagination, begin to transfigure a cinder-block and neon environment into a place auspicious for great learning. Classes out of doors occasionally or one-day trips can accomplish the same thing. Dress and, even more, countenance and body language are also important as signs of mutual respect. The outward ritual of class procedures should be made part of the learning: how participants address each other, reciprocity and (where appropriate) deference, even musicality as a distant goal—this is all part of the re-enactment of the ancient ceremony of learning that we are carrying on.

Do I have some kind of modern "Confucian academy" in mind that could serve as an example of educational *li* in action? No rustic one like Yang-ming's comes to mind; but if we can stray for a moment to a more elite model, I have been impressed at how Punahou School in Honolulu, more influenced now by east Asian culture than by its original Congregationalism, has a wonderfully Confucian aesthetic quality. In the words of teacher/administrator Sigfried Ramler:

> A certain transformation comes over the student upon passing inside these walls. There is an aura about this place that affects students and faculty, and even seems to extend to the flowers and trees. Inside these walls we all act somehow differently, with more respect. It is passed on year after year ... is larger than any one of us.[62]

Punahou is one of the few schools that has retained the sensuousness, the eros, of learning—something that Plato portrays unforgettably in the *Phaedrus* and Bloom longs for in *The Closing of the American Mind*. Ramler has found it most in the attitude of one sector of the student population, the Chinese girls. "They articulate things in terms of a general intellect and curiosity; they are vitally interested," he has observed.

Though a mid-Pacific academy may seem remote from most non-elite college settings, I believe that this model may be useful in helping to clarify the goal. The example of Confucius's disciple Tseng T'ien is relevant here, too. Four of Confucius's students had been asked to express their goals. Three described in detail their high political ambitions. "T'ien, what about you?" the Master asked. "In late spring," he replied, "I should like, together with five or six adults and six or seven boys, to go bathing in the River Yi and enjoy the breeze on the Rain Altar, then go home singing." The Master heaved a deep sigh and said, "I am with T'ien."[63]

Moral Dimensions. In an age of increasingly problematic moral relativism, the most important Confucian moral resource might be the tradition's unproblematic pre-assumption of a natural, objective morality. Confucius and Mencius never doubted that there is such a thing as a "highest Good" for humans, rooted in the natural affection and obligation between parents and children, and expressing itself broadly in all human relations. The encounter with Confucianism reawakens us to the possibility of a pattern (*li*) in an age in which we have assumed that we have nothing more definite to teach in the moral sphere than "personal value clarification."

Wang Yang-ming's *tse-shan* model suggests that our learning communities might themselves become moral communities. As we study the "irreducibility of human relatedness," the structure of pattern of obligations between children and parents, students and teachers, friends and friends, the living and the dead or not-yet-born, whether this be in "ethics class," "sociology class," or an interdisciplinary seminar, we should not hold this learning at arm's distance, but apply it to our own learning community. This might mean that, as the semester progresses, we begin to come to class more out of a sense of obligation to the group than merely "for grades"; or that we begin to use *tse-shan,* mutual exhortation, with each other, which, as Wang points out, requires "not only sincerity but also gentleness."[84] Such a vision of moral community transforms the culture of learning, challenging the utilitarian individual assumptions that now dominate our non-elite colleges.

Religious Dimensions. Tu suggests that learning to be human include not only learning to be "aesthetically refined" and "morally excellent," but also "religiously profound." How can this possibly become a part of public education? I believe that the Confucian mirror can be a great help to us in addressing the dilemma of the great spiritual vacuum that has been left in our public institutions by the separation (vital though it may be) of church and state. This is because Confucians like Tu use the term "religious" in a very non-sectarian sense. To become "religiously profound" involves the ultimate extension and deepening of aesthetic and moral sensitivities, represented symbolically by one's *li* (sense of propriety, ceremony) and *jen* (humanity) becoming *ch'eng,* sincere, authentic, receptive to *T'ien* (Heaven). As Tu once put it, "the nourished and cultivated mind, like the attuned ear, can perceive even the most incipient manifestations of God."[85]

Tu's use here of the Western term "God" is unusual; usually the suggestive but not clearly theistic term "Heaven" is used by Tu and other Confucians to suggest the sensitivity to "intangibles" that humans need to develop if they are to develop their human potential fully. Educator Barbara Mowat alludes

to something similar in *Seeing the Unseen.*[66] She laments the late-twentieth-century intellectual world's "anti-supernatural, antinuminous" assumptions, our failure to transmit to our children a sensitivity for an unseen reality behind the empirical world. Without specifically advocating belief in God or any religious doctrine, Mowat and the Confucians urge us to remain respectful to the spiritual dimension in order not to lose an essential dimension of our humanness.

The Intellectual and Repertoire Components

The aesthetic, moral, and religious dimensions of learning discussed above are often not emphasized systematically by non-elite educators in the rush to address intellect and repertoire. I have suggested that all three can be loosely combined under the contemporary heading "affective," but perhaps with a more powerful reading of that term than is usual: something like, "how close learning is to students' being." But of course the affective alone is not sufficient. What about the intellectual and repertoire components? Are there Confucian resources to draw on here?

Intellect, in the sense of analytical, skeptical, discursive thinking, is not part of the Confucian definition of *ta hsueh*. In fact, Liang Shu-ming criticized Western intellect as good only for selfish calculation, recommending instead a more organic, inferential faculty he called *li-hsing* (reason).

Two points need to be made here. First, some non-elite students who are weak in Western intellect might not be weak in Liang's organic reason. This suggests exploration of "different learning styles," to use current jargon. Second, however, I would argue that we should teach students a way of handling texts that is in part uniquely Western. Non-elite students in modern society, in order to understand the challenge to the traditional since 1600, need to be trained in the ability not only to understand a text as part of an ongoing conversation about the human (the Confucian and traditional Western way), but also in the skills of pulling apart a text, analyzing it, critiquing it, and dissecting it: in other words, treating it irreverently, in the Hobbesian, Humean, Nietzschean, Weberian, Goffmanian way that may leave us feeling not very nourished, but probably less naive, and certainly intellectually challenged. In integrating this dimension into "learning to be human," however, I would caution that it need be balanced by a concerted effort at "re-animating the old to arrive at the new"; analysis alone will lead to barrenness. For example, I would suggest that a successful pedagogy might pair a professor who stresses nourishment from texts with a skeptic who stresses intellectually dissecting them. The latter activity, by the way, is probably the least possible

for many non-elite students, who lack intellectual prowess; therefore, we may have to be satisfied here with small beginnings.

The intellectual and affective components are inseparable from a certain repertoire, or familiarity with original sources and seminal secondary sources. Textbooks, which tend to pre-digest and to leave little for the reader to do but memorize information, should be avoided. This is good Confucian as well as traditional Western advice. It leads to a repertoire of Homer, the pre-Socratics, Plato, the Bible, Augustine, Dante, Shakespeare, Galileo, Hobbes, Rousseau, Jefferson, Wordsworth, Douglass, Dickinson, Darwin, Marx, Nietzsche, Weber, du Bois, de Beauvoir, and so on (including, perhaps, a taste of Confucius or Tu). Of course, any number of substitutions are possible, but the point is that only works that are this great help us to become aesthetically refined, morally excellent, religiously profound, and intellectually challenged.

I need to mention two problems, however: one, reading level; the other, openness to the non-Western and the Third World. If students cannot handle college-level readings even in small doses with plenty of support, then they should study readings appropriate for ages twelve to eighteen. In this age range, in Bellah's words, "they might be reading rapidly, uncritically, widely, happily, and thoughtlessly." He suggests, for example, the Prodigal Son, the Minotaur, and Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare*, which are appropriate to any age. "Nothing is more lonely than to go through life unaccompanied by the sense that others have had similar experiences and have left a record of them," he adds.[67] In this way, even "remedial" work can prepare students for the "learning to be human" that lies ahead, much as Chinese children over the centuries who learned simpler classics by heart were laying the groundwork for later reflection. Second, we must break, at least symbolically, from the "Western civilization" mind-set that ignores how civilization has passed into a more global phase and recognize that First World Westerners can learn from Third World Easterners.

Afterword: On Practice

The reader might be curious as to whether "learning to be human" has ever been tested in practice. The answer is yes. In 1986, I collaborated with William Hatcher (English), Mary Hatcher (English), and Michael Intintoli (anthropology) to establish LIFT, Liberal Interdisciplinary Foundations for Transfer, a team-taught core program for a small group of Burlington County

College freshmen. Later we invited professors of Western civilization, modern philosophy, and comparative religion to join us. A Confucian vocabulary was not employed to describe the program, although the design was clearly similar to what has been discussed above in terms of affective, intellectual, and repertoire components. The original designers shared the goals of making LIFT a "moral and intellectual community" and of altering students' "culture of learning." The students who enrolled for our pilot group represented a rather typical cross-section of community college freshmen, with one qualification: we tried to select students who had at least the seeds of a different attitude toward learning, what I would now describe as a glimmer of *li-chih*.

At the end of the year, an evaluation was conducted. Most striking among its findings was that the affective component had begun to work. Student comments included: "I feel more like a total human being"; "never before did I express more of an interest in what I had learned, as opposed to what types of grades I pulled"; and "I did not think it possible that a community could come from the variety of backgrounds that constitute the LIFT family." Part of this was probably the fruit of the special civilized touches (*li*?) we attempted to include: weekly student-faculty luncheons, a gathering at a professor's home, a LIFT teapot (donated by a student), and regular human-to-human contact in small classes. Part was perhaps the result of the *tse shan* that I, in particular, attempted to incorporate into my class and into the team-taught "interdisciplinary seminar." Part was the pride and sense of wholeness with one's tradition that, according to student testimonies, came from handling the great books, however stumblingly.

One of the pleasant surprises of LIFT was that not only the student's "culture of learning" changed, but also the faculty's "culture of teaching." The evaluations that faculty wrote expressed a delight with being able to teach nourishing things again, with becoming "learners" again, and with "moving out of the isolation of the three-credit structure."

The faculty could not claim any miracles in raising intellectual levels, yet in discussing a typical student's "before" and "after" papers, we could say the following:

> This student's [after] paper is hardly elegant. Her command of the language of the philosophical/sociological community is limited. But we find it easy to sympathize with her difficulty in coming up with just the right word and phrasing; we almost prefer her roughness, because it reveals an honest search to comprehend difficult material. All three of the things we want are here: We want to see students handle the texts of our tradition, and this

> student is clearly beginning to get a sense of how to do that. We want to see the students' minds at work at as high a level as possible, and this student is clearly straining to make sense out of a basketful of new, subtly interrelated terms. We want students to be making some existential sense out of the material we study, and this student is clearly beginning to be involved in the material as providing possibilities for her moral and intellectual growth.

Wang Yang-ming would have been proud.

The next step in LIFT—and, I would recommend, a crucial factor in other nascent liberal arts core programs—is further consolidation around the goal of "learning to be human," particularly as new faculty are added. The greatest difficulty is to avoid falling into one of those close facsimiles to human learning that are really very different, such as "great books fundamentalism," "liberal arts for career enhancement and personal enrichment," or "studying for the state liberal arts exams." In this effort, the present essay is meant to serve as a kind of praxis.

Notes

[1] *The Analects of Confucius*, trans. Arthur Waley (New York: Random House, 1938), p. 124.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] I will later connect this phrase to the Chines *hsueh tso jen*. The term is used by Wei-ming Tu in *Confucian Thought: Selfhood as Creative Transformation* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1985), pp. 51-65.

[4] Pronounced DA *hsueh*. I am using the Wade-Giles system of romanization, in which *t* is pronounced *d* and *t'* is pronounced *t*. Hence, DU Wei-ming. Also, Wang should rhyme with "long," and Chou is pronounced JO. *Ch'* is pronounced *ch*.

[5] Robert N. Bellah *et al.*, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (New York: Harper and Row, 1985).

[6] To effect a deeper solution, however, this intervention of teachers must be a part of a larger civilizational effort, such as that suggested by Bellah *et al.* in *Habits of the Heart*.

[7] The Chinese term for Confucianism is literally "School of Scholars (*Ju*)." In *Confucian Thought*, Tu suggests that the modern approximation of the traditional Chinese idea of *ju* is "the scholar in the humanities" (p. 55).

[8] Willard Peterson (Princeton) argues that Wang Yang-ming and Liang Shu-ming, as well as others who turned in significant ways to Buddhist ideas in their world views, are not well described as "Confucians." For my purposes, however, I think the Confucian designation is adequate.

[9] *Jen* is also translatable as benevolence, human-heartedness, and authoritative. See David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames, *Thinking Through Confucius* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1987), p. 110, for an up-to-date summary of various translations. I would propose an additional one not mentioned there: "connected person," in the sense of one who grasps his/her interconnectedness both with other humans and with heaven and earth.

[10] Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987).

[11] "The Politics of Remediation," *Teaching the Developmental Education Student*, no. 57 (Spring 1987), p. 19.

[12] Cited in L. Bruce Laingen, "In Search of Public Servants," *Christian Science Monitor*, March 11, 1988, p. 14. See also the special education section, "The Meaning of America," in the *Monitor*, April 22, 1988, pp. B1-B12.

[13] R. C. Richardson, Jr., E. C. Fisk, and M. A. Okun, *Literacy in the Open Access College* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1983).

[14] McGrath and Spear, "The Politics of Remediation," pp. 17-19.

[15] George Cronk, presentation to the Colloquium on Community College Education, Princeton University, December 1987.

[16] "Ta Hsueh," in *Confucius*, ed. James Legge (New York: Dover, 1971), p. 357.

[17] See *Analects*, 2:18, and *Ta Hsueh*, 7.

[18] *Analects*, 7:2.

[19] *Ibid.*, 7:1, 7:2.

[20] See *ibid.*, 3:4, 3:17.

[21] *Ibid.*, 2:11.

[22] *Ibid.*, 7:18.

[23] *Ibid.*, 7:34.

[24] *Ibid.*, 7:7, 7:8.

[25] *Ibid.*, 1:2.

[26] Hall and Ames, *Thinking Through Confucius*, pp. 110-25.

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 129.

[28] (New York: Harper and Row, 1972).

[29] *Analects*, 1:12.

[30] *Ibid.*, 1:4, 2:22; *Chung Yung*, 22.

[31] See Hall and Ames, p. xiv.

[32] I have combined elements from Legge's, Waley's and Lau's translations for my own.

[33] Again, this is a combined translation.

[34] Wei-ming Tu, *Centrality and Commonality: An Essay on Chung Yung*, Society for Asian and Comparative Philosophy Monograph no. 3 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1976), p. 2.

[35] Tu, *Confucian Thought*, p. 28.

[36] *Ibid.*, pp. 76, 103.

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 14.

[38] "Mencius," 3:4 in *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, ed. Wing-tsit Chan (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 69-70.

[39] Tu, *Confucian Thought*, p. 100.

[40] Wei-ming Tu, *Neo-Confucian Thought in Action: Wang Yang-ming's Youth (1472-1509)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), p. 86.

[41] See D. C. Lau, *Mencius* (New York: Penguin, 1983), p. 40.

[42] For a favorable view of Chu Hsi's line of interpretation, see Wing-tsit Chan, *Chu Hsi: Life and Thought* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1987).

[43] Tu, *Neo-Confucian Thought in Action*, p. x.

[44] *Ibid.*, p. 68.

[45] *Ibid.*, pp. 125-26.

[46] *Ibid.*, p. 129.

[47] *Analects*, 10:13, as quoted in *ibid.*, p. 135.

[48] *Ibid.*, p. 147.

[49] *Ibid.*, pp. 149-50.

[50] *Ibid.*, p. 142.

[51] *Ibid.*, p. 144.

[52] *Ibid.*, p. 141.

[53] See Guy Alitto, *The Last Confucian: Liang Shu-ming and the Chinese Dilemma of Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), p. 184. Alitto's suggested Western equivalents of the term "natural reason" include Coleridge's "reason" as opposed to "rationality" and Neuman's "illative sense."

[54] *Ibid.*, p. 124.

[55] *Ibid.*, pp. 248-53, 206-15.

[56] Tu, *Confucian Thought*, p. 52.

[57] *Ibid.*, p. 139.

[88] *Ibid.*, p. 113.

[89] Tu, *Neo-Confucian Thought in Action*, p. 143.

[90] There is more discussion of this in the repertoire section below.

[91] Martin Spear and Dennis McGrath, "A Model General Education Progam," *Review and Proceedings of the Community College Humanities Association* (1984), pp. 40–47.

[92] I interviewed Dr. Ramler in July 1987 at Punahou.

[93] I have combined Waley and Lau's translations of *Analects*, 11:25, for the version given here.

[94] Tu, *Neo-Confucian Thought in Action*, p. 144.

[95] Tu, *Confucian Thought*, p. 132.

[96] (New Haven, Ct.: Society for Values in Higher Education, Fall 1983), p. 3.

[97] Robert N. Bellah, "Reanimating Tradition," *Community College Humanities Review*, no. 8 (1987), p. 12.

Philosophy Comes Down to Earth: Critical Thinking and California's Community Colleges*

Joel Rudinow

In his opening remarks to the sixty-fifth annual convention of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, Ernest Boyer spoke of a recent trip to India, where he learned "that educators in that nation are eager to hear, not about our universities, but about our two-year institutions. The simple truth is that America's community colleges are the envy of the world."[1]

Noting that community colleges enroll more than half of the nation's incoming freshmen annually, including by far the largest percentage of the nation's minority students, Boyer went on to stress the significance of the community college as an egalitarian force in American higher education: "The community college has opened doors of opportunity to Hispanics, to native Americans, and to blacks. It is the community college that has given millions of older Americans a second chance for dignity and human growth."[2]

Echoing these sentiments, the Commission for the Review of the Master Plan for Higher Education in the State of California reaffirmed in its 1986 report, *The Challenge of Change*, that the mission of California's community colleges is to provide meaningful access to post-secondary education. On page 2 the commissioners say, "In the final analysis, we support the historic commitment to open access," and their first recommendation reads: "That the Governor and the Legislature join in a reaffirmation of open access to the California Community Colleges as a cornerstone in the State's efforts to provide equal opportunity to all high school graduates and others at least eighteen years of age capable of profiting from the instruction offered."[3]

The commission also dealt with an opposing point of view. A *San Francisco*

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Examiner article dated January 5, 1986—some eight months following Boyer's address and two months before the publication of the commission's report—headlined "Unprepared Students Plague Community Colleges" reads in part:

> Each year tens of thousands of under-qualified students take advantage of the system's open-door policy that allows entry to anyone older than eighteen or who has a high school diploma. A 1981 survey found that community colleges spent an estimated $66 million on remedial classes. That expensive and expanding remedial education system is under attack as educators and policy makers question the wisdom and cost of California's open-door policy.

In response to sentiments such as these, the commission went on to hedge its reaffirmation of the commitment to open access with qualifications. First the commission insisted that "access" be made "meaningful" by linking it with "success": "But access must be meaningful; and to be meaningful it must be access to a quality system that helps ensure the success of every student who enrolls."[4] Then the commission expressed concern that the traditional policy of open access actually undermines the prospects of success. "Attempting to be all things to all people is a task too large for success, yet it is the task the community colleges find themselves facing in their efforts to maintain open access."[5]

In their final report to the California State Legislature, the bi-partisan Joint Committee for the Review of the Master Plan for Higher Education seemed to understand and appreciate the community college's growing commitment to what is now being called "transitional education," a commitment that derives directly from open access:

> What will it mean that these colleges ... will be called upon for the tasks of retraining workers, teaching English to those recently among us, providing skills and opportunities for the elderly, providing a second chance to those who were failed by our secondary schools, and still provide lower division transfer education of quality and integrity for all who want it? Some fear that they will cease to be colleges .... Others will welcome this new epoch as a challenge of unprecedented opportunity: Does this state have the wit and will to forge a new range of educational engagements for our people? Can the faculty honor those who teach basic skills and literacy, as well as those who teach Shakespeare and Plato?[6]

That there is a fundamental conflict here ought to be patently obvious to anyone who takes the trouble to study the relevant documents. Just what we are to make of the conflict is a matter much more open to discussion. Though they scarcely rise to the surface of the discussion, the fundamental issues here

concern the dynamics of class, race, gender, economic and political power, and so on that animate our cultural life and the ongoing struggles that constitute it. These large questions, though they are by no means irrelevant to an understanding of the debate over educational policy, cannot be settled here.[7] However, we should not overlook the widening gap between the ideals in terms of which community colleges are justified (*e.g.*, open access to quality higher education) and a policy that makes pursuing such ideals more difficult. We might also recognize the attempt to paper over the gap by adjusting the meaning of the terminology in which these fundamental ideals are expressed—the subtle but crucial shift in the concept of "access" from "open access" to "meaningful access," for example. Though the commission specifically recommends that the governor and the legislature reaffirm open access, it is also responsive to those who see the growing demand for remedial and basic educational programs arising out of the changing demographics of California's population—and therefore of the student body of the community college as well—as a threat to the continued success of vocational and transfer programs. Accordingly, the commission recommends ranking these as separate functions of the community college: transfer programs to take top priority, along with (or over, depending upon how you interpret the commission's wording) vocational programs, over remedial programs—and these in turn are ranked above non-credit adult basic education and fee-based community service programs. In times of increasingly uncertain funding, the significance of priority rankings of this sort, for all participants (faculty, staff, and students), increases dramatically. In the likely event that at least some campuses find themselves in the position of having to choose between remedial and transfer programs, the priorities are here being set. On the other hand, the bi-partisan committee of the legislature, with much greater wisdom, in my view, challenges the community colleges to build innovative bridges between these functions.

In the context of this discussion, the situation of critical thinking as a course, as an area of educational emphasis, as a degree requirement, as an area of specialized professional expertise, and so on, is quite intriguing. This is because it is not at all clear to which of the commission's priority categories it belongs. Thus it presents itself also as a model for innovative bridge-building.

An excellent case can be made for critical thinking as a top priority commitment of the community college. Numerous four-year degree programs require it. Thus it is among the most widely transferable courses that the community college offers.

Yet there are some who would argue that critical thinking should be regarded as a remedial area of educational emphasis and therefore as a remedial course. This argument begins by noting that critical thinking is widely and increasingly regarded as appropriate for study in the primary and secondary grades. Accordingly, it is more and more frequently mandated as an area of educational emphasis throughout the public schools. Yet there is considerable evidence of a continuing need for remediation in this area at the post-secondary level. Notice, however, that from these premises it follows only that instruction in critical thinking can or does serve a remedial function at the community college level, not that it cannot or does not also serve the functions of a transferable college-level course. (Incidentally, a strong case can also be made for critical thinking as a community service course, and as an adult basic educational offering as well. But it would not follow from this, either, that the course could not simultaneously serve the purposes of a fully transferable college-level course.)

Though there are those who would like to see critical thinking clearly defined as either transferable or remedial, I am convinced that this would be a mistake, it would be like trying to determine whether instruction in mathematics should be considered remedial or transferable. One of the more influential arguments to this effect suggests that critical thinking courses and requirements pose a threat to the curricula in the humanities and philosophy, and that credit for the critical thinking course ought not to be counted toward the fulfillment of humanities breadth requirements or philosophy major requirements for the B.A. degree.[8] This argument turns on the assumption that students, especially community college students, are likely to take at most one philosophy (or more generally humanities) offering during the course of their studies and the claim that a basic skills course aimed in large part at remediation cannot also function as an adequate introduction to philosophy or the humanities.

Well, that depends on how (philosophically) the instructor approaches such a course. Granted, one cannot do in critical thinking what one would normally do in (even) an introductory-level philosophy course: namely, presuppose that the students know what an argument is and are already able to recognize, assess, and construct arguments with some ease and sophistication. It does not follow from this, though, that one cannot engage students in philosophy in a meaningful way. It follows only that to do so is a challenge, particularly under an open-admissions policy.

Consider, for example, the case of Santa Rosa Junior College, in some ways a typical, and in many ways an exemplary community college. At Santa Rosa,

the critical thinking course presently flourishes as a single, free-standing, fully transferable credit course required for the Associate degree, yet open to all without prerequisite.[9] It attracts and retains students ranging in age from sixteen to over seventy with the widest imaginable range of backgrounds, abilities, disabilities, goals, ambitions, and limitations—in other words, just the sort of student body one would expect under an open-admissions policy. There are recent emigres from diverse linguistic backgrounds, concurrently studying English as a second language, alongside accelerated high school students clearing core degree requirements in advance of matriculation into the California university and state university systems. There are high school graduates enrolled in two-year vocational programs and students aiming for four-year degrees and for graduate school. There are people "searching for themselves," wondering whether they should try to be students. There are working people from the community with no long-term educational ambitions other than to improve themselves and their circumstances through further study. There are even some people just killing time. To be sure, this presents an enormous pedagogical challenge in several dimensions; yet the course continues to grow both in popularity and in terms of academic respect. Could it be that the critical thinking course rises to meet this challenge exactly to the extent that it seeks to cultivate the love of wisdom in each student, regardless of the student's background, capabilities, handicaps, and so on?

In this idea, we may recognize the ancient formulation of the aim of philosophy. But do not suspect me of attempting to secure the critical thinking market exclusively for the philosophy department. For, as any true lover of wisdom knows, academic philosophy holds no monopoly on wisdom, which resides in numerous traditions and disciplines. On the other hand, there is reason for concern that the presence and influence of the philosophical tradition in this area of instruction could undergo serious erosion, to the detriment not only of professional philosophers but of the quality and integrity of instruction in critical thinking as well.

Instructors trained in the tradition and discipline of philosophy may feel particularly well qualified and equipped to take up this challenge. In doing so, philosophers need to remind themselves from time to time how ridiculously remote and out of touch with this world philosophical discourse frequently seems to people beset with perfectly legitimate mundane concerns, like finding work. What must a detailed discussion of the ontology of non-existent objects sound like to the average nursing student? It also helps to recognize that authentic philosophical insights can and do occur to students who have no idea who Wittgenstein was or what "epistemological" means. I remember a discussion in one critical thinking class on the topic of self-deception in

which a student said to the instructor, "You keep talking about 'the self' like it was a 'thing.' How can you call the self a 'thing'?" To which another student responded, "Yeah, but it's not a 'nothing'." One worthy goal of instruction in philosophy, and one that ought to animate instruction in critical thinking, is to empower the student by bringing wisdom down to earth and making it accessible and relevant to his or her experience and concerns.

Postscript: September 1988

Recently I was called upon to address a consortium of community college educators in California who had been charged with the responsibility for implementing new recommendations and regulations governing academic standards for the Associate degree. Because these new recommendations and regulations stressed the notion of "college-level critical thinking," I was asked if I would define the term for them. This reminded me of an experience I had as an undergraduate when a fellow student challenged a professor to define philosophy. The professor responded with what I then thought of as an intriguing evasion and only later came to appreciate as the truth: "That, young man," said the professor, "is a very good philosophical question." This is very much the situation we face today, as we are called upon, not so much by our students as by our committees of oversight, both internal and external, to define college-level critical thinking. We should be wary of the sort of definitional demands frequently on the agendas of institutional accountability, lest all the wisdom be wrung out of our programs of instruction in critical thinking. When my former philosophy professor sidestepped the issue of defining philosophy, he met a good philosophical question with a very good philosophical answer. Similarly, I must say that I would rather teach critical thinking than try to define it.

I remember reading once—I think it was in *Scientific American*—how the behavior of schooling fish is due to a genetically encoded trait whereby the speed and direction of each typical member's swimming is adjusted to the speed and direction of the others. A disturbance anywhere in or near the school can easily and quickly produce a marked change in the course of the entire group, a change the individual members participate in *en masse*, unblinking and unthinking. Something disturbingly similar to this almost took place in the state of California, nearly changing the course of the entire publicly funded sector of post-secondary education.

Acting on what they understood to be a mandated efficiency measure in the master plan review, an *ad hoc* committee of the Intersegmental Committee of California State Academic Senates (representing the faculties of the nine-campus University of California, the nineteen-campus California State Uni-

versity, and the 106 California community colleges) drafted a new statewide general education transfer curriculum intended to facilitate academic transfer within and among all three segments of publicly funded higher education in the state. The draft proposal mentioned but did not spell out critical thinking as an aspect of the general subject area "English Communication," which stresses written composition. The draft proposal thus constituted a significant departure from Executive Order no. 338, which presently governs general education degree requirements in the CSU system, and therefore also substantially determines instruction in the community colleges. This executive order articulates an instructional agenda for critical thinking in specific detail, as distinct from the traditional curriculum in English composition:

> Instruction in critical thinking is to be designed to achieve an understanding of the relationship of language to logic, which should lead to the ability to analyze, criticize, and advocate ideas, to reason inductively and deductively, and to reach factual or judgmental conclusions based on sound inferences drawn from unambiguous statements of knowledge or belief.

Though a number of serious objections to the elimination of this language were quickly raised and a number of rather glaring weaknesses in the putative rationale for the revisions were quickly recognized and pointed out, the plan was received and treated on several individual CSU campuses by local academic deans, senates, and committees as a *fait accompli*. Among the predictable consequences of such a measure and its implementation was the likelihood of an appreciable shift in the burden of instruction in critical thinking from philosophy to English and speech communications, a shift already visible on several CSU campuses. The potential impact of this on the community colleges would of course depend on the extent to which free-standing courses of instruction in critical thinking were phased out and on the extent to which genuinely philosophical instruction would have been phased into remaining curricula. The prospects as of early 1988 were not at all encouraging. The plan had already gathered considerable momentum at high levels of administration within the pivotal California State University by the time it was unveiled to local faculty senates with the California State University and to faculty within the community college system. Though an emergency eleventh-hour lobbying effort on the part of the California State University and community college faculty to avert the measure did eventually succeed, the whole adventure demonstrated the vulnerability of such programs as critical thinking within community colleges.

Notes

*Earlier versions of this paper were presented to a Symposium on Teaching Philosophy in Two-Year Colleges at the Pacific Division of the American Philosophical Association and at the fifth international conference on critical thinking and educational reform at Sonoma State University in 1987.

[1] Ernest Boyer, "Toward the Year 2000: A Community College Agenda: Four Points of Educational Leadership," *AACJC Journal* (August-September 1986), pp. 14-20.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] Commission for the Review of the Master Plan for Higher Education, *The Challenge of Change* (Sacramento, Calif., 1986), p. 6.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 2.

[5] *Ibid.* Oddly, the commissioners seen to think the task of ensuring the success of every student who enrolls somehow less insurmountable.

[6] Joint Committee for the Review of the Master Plan for Higher Education, *California Community College Reform* (Sacramento, Calif., 1987), pp. 2, 3.

[7] A provocative and well-documented exploration of these matters may be found in Ira Shor, *Culture Wars* (Boston: Methuen, 1986).

[8] Philip Pecorino, "Critical Thinking: A Caution Concerning New Approaches," panel presentation before the National Conference of the Community College Humanities Association, San Francisco, 1986; now published as "Philosophy as a Service Discipline: A Caution," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*, vol. 60 (March 1987), pp. 667-80.

[9] The critical thinking requirement at Santa Rosa Junior College is also satisfied by a course in argumentation offered by the Department of Speech/Communications. Instructors from that program and the Philosophy Department have collaborated on a team-taught interdisciplinary course designed to give the students an opportunity to (1) benefit from the insights of both the philosophical and the rhetorical traditions, (2) evaluate for themselves the relative strengths and weaknesses of both traditions, and (3) to observe the process of critical thinking in action as exemplified in the dialogue between the instructors as representatives of the two traditions.

Critical Thinking in the Guise of Philosophy: A Threat to the Humanities
(A Reply to Joel Rudinow)

Philip A. Pecorino

In the pages of this journal Dr. Joel Rudinow has advanced an argument in favor of free-standing courses in critical thinking. His case notwithstanding, such courses in critical thinking pose a serious threat to the status of the humanities in higher education, most acutely at two-year colleges. Such courses, when offered for credits which may be applied towards the satisfaction of a distribution requirement or a specific requirement in the humanities or in philosophy in particular would reduce, or in many cases eliminate what little opportunity there is at present for students to experience the humanities as part of their formal education. The liberal arts component of general education programs or core programs is intended to expose students to a fuller range of human experience and endeavor than had previously been part of their lives, opening them up to new ways of seeing their world and nurturing attitudes and dispositions sensitive to the needs, aspirations, and limitations of their fellow human beings. Using critical thinking courses to satisfy liberal arts requirements substitutes the development of intellectual or cognitive skills devoid of content for this experience.

The case Rudinow advances in "Philosophy Comes Down to Earth" is one that is being made with increasing frequency within the academy, but it is usually presented by those outside of the humanities. Professor Rudinow's version of the argument, coming as it does from one trained in philosophy, is unusual. Both by virtue of its origin and in consideration of its significance, it deserves careful attention.

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The need for developing basic communication and computational skills of the overwhelming majority of students who enter institutions of higher education in this country is hardly debatable. It is commonly recognized, however reluctantly, as one of the most important problems that such institutions must address. In addition to developing basic skills in reading and writing, colleges need to develop the skills that enable students to deal with the written word critically and to organize their thoughts clearly and coherently. For many, the simplistic and vague term "critical thinking skills" is more a description of a problem that needs to be remedied than it is a picture of some set of cognitive skills that need to be developed in a careful and demonstrable fashion. The development of critical thinking courses and projects, including "Critical Thinking Across the Curriculum" programs, represents, in part, an effort to deal with the declining levels of ability in basic skills of students entering higher education classes. Indeed, efforts at developing critical thinking skills have now been extended downward to the secondary and elementary levels of education. There are even efforts under way to begin the development of such skills in kindergarten classes!

The growth in the number of critical thinking courses and their inclusion in the curricula of elementary and secondary schools testify to the strong belief that critical thinking skills, whatever they may be, should be developed as early as possible. Formal instruction in such skills at the college level is generally regarded as a necessity born of the failure of the educational system to have developed them earlier. Given that it will take quite some time to implement the educational reforms required if we are to make effective critical thinkers of average high school graduates, the need for and the popularity of critical thinking courses at the college level is assured.

I do not wish to argue against the need for such courses and programs. I have myself taught such courses, have presented workshops on their development, and have served as a consultant to several institutions of higher education seeking to develop such courses. My concern here is with educational policies and objectives and with the related political issues. I am concerned that critical thinking courses are seen as an important component of every program. I am concerned with how such courses are conceived and with how well they are taught. Who is to teach critical thinking? Is it to receive credit? When is it to be taken? What requirements can it be used to satisfy? These are all questions that have troubled me for sometime—for good reason, I believe.

An instructor of philosophy from a two-year college in Tennessee once informed me that he was happy to have a job, but that he was the only philosophy instructor at the institution where he worked and that, since the introduc-

tion of the critical thinking course, his teaching load had consisted of nothing but critical thinking courses. The standard offerings in philosophy had been abandoned under the direction of a dean who had no experience with philosophy himself and apparently little appreciation for it, either. In this instance, the nature of philosophy is being defined by a non-philosopher who is making judgments more on the basis of economics and expediency than on the basis of respect for the traditions of the liberal arts. The educational issues involved here are significant, the implications for philosophy are ominous, and the probable consequences for higher education are disturbing.

In another instance, the head of a psychology department in a two-year technical institution in North Carolina requested my help in developing a course in critical thinking for her institution. The dean of academic affairs had informed her that, as of the following fall semester, a critical thinking course would be a requirement for all students. She had been selected to develop the course and her department had given her this responsibility based on her experience with cognitive psychology. There were no philosophy instructors at the college, and the dean's background was in engineering. In an already highly concentrated curricula with few elective credits, the critical thinking course would satisfy the three-credit requirement in the general education program's liberal arts core.

These are not isolated incidents. I have met dozens of instructors from two-year colleges across the country who have had similar experiences. An instructor from a college in Florida with no background in philosophy was given a month's notice that he was to teach a critical thinking course that would be considered a philosophy course. His background was in music.

Those who think that critical thinking courses are of value no matter who teaches them, how they are defined, or where they fit into the curriculum may not have a problem with the decisions and practices I have described, but surely critical and responsible thought would demand that one examine the implications of such decisions in the general context of the educational objectives of the institution and within the more general historical and cultural context.

When critical thinking courses are offered for credit and those credits are used to satisfy humanities or philosophy requirements, the consequences for the humanities can be disastrous. At the institution in North Carolina mentioned above, the critical thinking course eliminated the only opportunity most students had within their degree program to take literature, art, music, dance, cinema, history, or Western civilization courses. Given that most two-

year degree programs require few credits in the humanities, and some none at all, and given that most students do not readily take courses not required for their degree, what is to become of the humanities in general and philosophy in particular should critical thinking be equated with them?

At this point, I want to make my position clear so that the reader will not mistake my intent, as Professor Rudinow seems to have done in reference to my "Philosophy as a Service Discipline: A Caution."[1] I would have a critical thinking course required of every student in every curriculum at every college in this country. It would be considered a remedial course, offered without credit and linked with other courses in basic communication skills. It would be part of a program that attempted to develop such skills in every discipline and in every course in every curriculum because skills developed in stand-alone critical thinking courses tend to atrophy if they are not developed further in the context of content courses.

Furthermore, I hold that philosophers and those trained in speech/act theory, as well as cognitive psychologists, should be involved in the development, implementation, and evaluation of such courses. As for the institution itself, however, the faculty assigned to teach courses in critical thinking, although they need not come from any specific discipline, should all have had some training in theories of reasoning, problem solving, and decision making.

I would not have such courses used to satisfy either distribution requirements or specific requirements in the liberal arts core or as part of the general education program or core. This stance is based upon my awareness not just of the tendency or possibility of such courses displacing humanities courses, but of their actually having done so. Furthermore, critical thinking courses often lack even the minimal content one expects of a humanities course. In consideration of what the humanities are and what their study is intended to accomplish, I find critical thinking seriously lacking. I must grant that no single humanities courses or set of two or three such courses could accomplish all that most educators would like. However, most humanists at least try to expose their students to the rich tradition of humanity's endeavors to understand the human condition and to deal with it.

I am not so naive as to believe that all degree requirements are necessary for the successful completion of a course of study or proper preparation for further study. I know all too well that curricular requirements are juggled in terms of the staffing needs of departments and of the institution. But this is wrong in that it serves the interests of the faculty at the expense of the students. Using critical thinking courses as a way to create or preserve jobs for

philosophers or humanists or for instructors from any discipline that is experiencing a decline in enrollment would be another example of the common but short-sighted tendency to deal with one problem by ignoring others. It may be that those who welcome a trend that preserves or expands employment opportunities may not care to consider the long-term consequences of their success. The price they will pay may well involve the devaluation, if not total displacement, of their academic disciplines.

Consider the following facts. More that half of all those entering college do so at a two-year college. Eighty percent of humanities courses taken in institutions of higher education are taken in the first year of studies. Most students who study the humanities or philosophy at two-year colleges do not take more than one course. If critical thinking courses may be taken in fulfillment of philosophy or humanities requirements, what results are likely? Critical thinking courses are likely to be quite popular because students tend to see them as relevant. But if a course in critical thinking is their only exposure to the humanities, I fear that nearly an entire generation of Americans will have a distorted view of both philosophy and the humanities. When their children ask them whether to take a philosophy course, they may be told, "Yes, it's a good course. They teach you how to read and write editorials." There is a lot more to philosophy and the humanities than that.

I do not understand why critical thinking courses cannot be accepted for what they are: remedial courses, developmental courses, courses to take care of a problem caused by the failure of the elementary and secondary schools to provide their students with the full range of intellectual skills necessary to become responsible and productive members of society. I believe that the attempt to give credit for such courses at the college level and to force them to "fit" somewhere in the curriculum is the result of a lack of integrity, a lack of honesty, and a lack of courage. It reflects the unfortunate tendency of some academic administrators to follow the path of least resistance and accountability. If a course, especially a "quick fix" course, can be fit into the current curriculum, such administrators will do so. If some faculty members want to teach it or can be made to teach it, it will be taught. This is hardly the best way to revise curricular requirements, however.

In 1987, I placed a call for syllabi for critical thinking courses in the newsletters and bulletins of the American Philosophical Association, the American Association of Philosophy Teachers, and the Association for Informal Logic and Critical Thinking. I have also asked for syllabi at workshops I have given across the country and examined the contents of over forty textbooks published for use in critical thinking courses. I have not found, in any syllabus or

textbook, content minimally sufficient to justify applying the term "philosophy" or "humanities" to the courses for which they were intended. This is not the place to enunciate in detail my standards for a humanities course. I should think, however, in a course to be considered a basic philosophy course, indeed as an introduction to the entire discipline and to the tradition of thought, that students would be exposed to the methodology of the field and to the issues and questions to which that method has been applied for millennia. A student should come away from such a course with a modicum of knowledge and appreciation of, as well as a skill or practice in reflective and critical thought.

Fortunately for those who share my concerns, there is now a statement of policy issued by the presiding national board of officers of the American Philosophical Association on philosophy at two-year colleges.[2] It states, in part, that courses in critical thinking, along with those in applied ethics, should not be considered as satisfying requirements in philosophy that are included in the general education program or the liberal arts and science core.

Critical thinking courses seek to develop the intellectual skills that are associated with higher-order thought processes: argumentation, logic, decision making, and problem solving. But such thought processes are also characteristic of good scientists and good literary critics, good sociologists, and so forth. There is no real reason why it should be philosophy and philosophy alone that is equated with critical thinking. Is it not one of the objectives of the course to have the students become critical thinkers themselves? They are not being trained to become philosophers. But such courses, as presently designed and taught, do not present anything of the tradition of thought associated with the term "philosophy." They do not introduce students to the issues that have been the perennial topics of philosophical discourse. They touch upon the methodology but not the content. Almost without exception, critical thinking courses avoid any serious discussion of the theory of argumentation, or the epistemological positions and metaphysical assumptions that the text they are using depends upon.

When many such courses are being taught by non-philosophers, how can they hope to accomplish what an introductory philosophy course would, or an ethics or aesthetics course might? How can a student claim to have studied philosophy after having completed a critical thinking course if he or she does not even know what metaphysics, ontology, epistemology, cosmology, aesthetics, ethics, and philosophy of religion are about or what some of the key issues are in each area? How can a person be credited with having studied

philosophy without having participated in a genuinely philosophical discussion, guided through it in such a way as to develop an appreciation for what is uniquely philosophical in such exchanges? Critical thinking courses do not include such a discussion of the perennial issues of philosophical importance and usually do not engage students in dialectical, dialogical, or other approaches to the typically philosophical discussion of philosophical issues.

As to critical thinking courses satisfying humanities requirements, it is impossible to reduce the aim of the humanities to the development of basic communication skills. One specious argument that attempts to do so goes as follows. Students need to read and write better in order to do better in college and to be more marketable to employers. Students, therefore, take humanities courses in order to learn how to read and write better, but humanities courses have not been as successful in developing these skills as was expected. A critical thinking course that addresses these skills directly would be a more effective way to develop them, so taking that course should satisfy the humanities requirement. Such an argument, however, reduces the humanities to a set of disciplines that accomplishes little more than developing basic communications skills and ignores the universal and timeless issues that it is the true mission of the humanities to explore.

The debate concerning the classification and status of critical thinking courses is a reflection of the more general debate about the nature and purpose of higher education in this country. Many look on America's colleges as institutions that exist to give members of our society, especially those recently arrived and those previously excluded, an opportunity to develop themselves and gain access to a wider range of economic opportunities. Colleges should produce responsible and productive members of society: wage earners, taxpayers, and informed voters. Training and skill development are therefore what is called for and critical thinking courses have a place in this agenda. The liberal arts and sciences, however, are elitist and irrelevant to economic advancement. The opposing point of view regards higher education as an opportunity to develop more complete human beings, to expand the individual's capacities, and to develop abilities across the board. From this point of view, critical thinking courses and programs have a place as part of a total program, but cannot be substituted for, nor treated as the same as the humanities.

The case advanced by Professor Rudinow, maintaining as it does the value of the stand-alone, accredited course in critical thinking considered as philosophy and taught by philosophers, needs to be examined carefully in light of the

considerations discussed above. When one does so, it becomes apparent that the argument rests on questionable assumptions.

To begin with, Rudinow's comments are intended to apply to critical thinking courses across the country, but his examples are all drawn from California institutions. California is a special case. An executive order mandated the study of critical thinking in all colleges in the California system, but such courses satisfy only the critical thinking requirement, not philosophy requirements (where they exist) or liberal arts requirements. Since critical thinking is a requirement in the core program in California, such courses earn credits and are thus readily transferable to other institutions with similar requirements.

Professor Rudinow presents the issue as one of clarifying the status of critical thinking courses as transferable or remedial. In his reference to the article of mine mentioned above, however, he misrepresents my position on the question, making it appear as if I were offering but two alternatives. Actually, of course, there are several ways of offering courses and programs that develop critical thinking skills, and I was not taking an "either/or" approach, but rather a "both/and" approach. Although I recommend non-credit critical thinking courses as part of a program for the development of basic intellectual skills, I do not object to critical thinking courses being offered for credit. What I do mind is those credits displacing other courses, especially humanities courses—the equation of critical thinking and philosophy, for example.

Dr. Rudinow is correct in reporting that I claim that remedial basic skills courses cannot also serve to introduce students to the humanities or to philosophy. My views are shared by chemistry instructors, literature instructors, and, in fact, by every instructor I have ever met who was presented with the prospect of attempting to accomplish these two things simultaneously within a single-semester course of three hours per week. There is simply not enough time both to develop basic skills and to present all the information basic to a specific discipline. And students cannot apply basic skills in a college-level course of study without first having mastered those skills.

Professor Rudinow reports with some satisfaction that the critical thinking course at Santa Rosa Junior College which he teaches receives credit and has been successfully integrated into the curriculum. Once again, California colleges are a special case given the executive order referred to above, which makes Rudinow's sample both small and unrepresentative. Research indicates that such courses are being taught in this country in a variety of settings, by instructors from various disciplines and are positioned within the curriculum

in a number of different ways. Rudinow's sample, then, is too limited by the peculiarities of the California system to be useful in an attempt to generate general guidelines for the rest of the country.

Professor Rudinow attempts to justify the acceptance of critical thinking courses as philosophy courses with an illustration of a worst-case scenario in which students in a particular philosophy course were baffled by philosophical discussion. He asks, "What must a detailed discussion of the ontology of non-existent objects sound like to the average nursing student?" The implication is that such an issue is totally irrelevant, but that is not necessarily true. A good instructor can make it relevant and also can use it to accomplish some of the basic aims of the humanities at the same time.

Finally, in his postscript, Professor Rudinow declares that he "would rather teach critical thinking than try to define it," despite the fact that the state of California is offering credit for such courses. How can one award credit for what one cannot define? Without a definition of what is being taught, how can one evaluate such courses? Professor Rudinow's deliberate avoidance of definition is a hindrance to effective discussion of the issues and a disservice to those engaged in the development of critical thinking courses.

As a responsible member of the profession of teaching, Professor Rudinow should be engaged in a critical dialogue intended to clarify the issues, especially at a time when authorities in California are reconsidering the executive order and revising requirements. Responsible educators should insist that those who claim to be satisfying an educational requirement provide evidence that that they are doing so and that those who argue on behalf of an educational reform, objective, or policy are able to explain their position, define their key terms, and offer evidence in support of their case. Professor Rudinow has more to fear from those who do a poor job of defending their positions than he does from those who insist on clear definition and reasoned arguments.

Notes

[1] *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*, vol. 60 (March 1987), pp. 677, 80.

[2] *Ibid.*, vol. 61 (March 1988).

Painful, Necessary Reminders

Melissa Sue Kort

The Collegiate Function of Community Colleges, by Arthur M. Cohen and Florence B. Brawer. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1987. xx + 249 pp. $24.95

The collegiate function of community colleges, according to Arthur M. Cohen and Florence B. Brawer, involves two related elements: the liberal arts curriculum and the transfer function. Cohen, president of the Center for Study of Community Colleges and director of the ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges, and Brawer, a leading researcher for both organizations, have compiled compelling statistics describing the current crisis in the liberal arts; they have also reached challenging conclusions about the implications of those statistics for curriculum, program, and particularly faculty development.

While the authors clearly define their audience in the introduction—"directors of instruction, admissions officers, curriculum planners, faculty members, counselors, division chairs, ... state level planners and members of governing boards" (p. xvii)—they waste two chapters reiterating the definition of community colleges. Does this audience require a history lesson on how colleges have their roots in medieval monastic life? Do these leaders have to be told how community colleges are "gateways to higher education"? Too often in this book, the style gets in the way of the information, but never more strongly so than in the beginning. One is grateful for the summaries at the end of the first chapters, which allow one to move on quickly to the more interesting studies.

The authors specify the social role of liberal arts, the communities' awareness that "each new generation must be acculturated." They define this process in the broadest terms possible: the curriculum teaches "principles to rationality, language judgment, criticism, inquiry, disciplined creativity, sensitivity to cultures and the environment, and awareness of history" (p. 7). There is no set text list here; in the best tradition of liberal education, acculturation is defined as a series of skills, "core concepts of general education" (p. 178).

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Always practical, Cohen and Brawer argue, "The curricula that promote social cohesion or economic development are more likely to engage support from legislators than are the courses directed toward individual benefit (enhancing self-concept, filling leisure time) which are likely to be considered self-indulgent." Faculty in the liberal arts, therefore, should promote "their curriculum's usefulness in the workplace and its contribution to the well-being of the community" (p. 170). Here the goals of liberal arts get confused with the emphasis on the transfer function: "few courses in few colleges are designed especially for students who will never take another course in that field and who could benefit from instruction that fostered their own values and sense of social responsibility" (p. 44). Cohen and Brawer argue for a strengthening of non-credit programs to serve these students and to draw students into credit programs in the liberal arts; they are, however, aware that non-credit programs are losing their support as college purse strings tighten.

The Collegiate Function recognizes a number of contradictions facing transfer programs. Without the transfer function, the authors warn, community colleges risk losing both their societal value and their support base. Yet statistics show that the character of the community college student is not conducive to transfer, and characteristics of the institutions "militate" against transfer (p. 100). The authors recommend improving the transfer function and developing a clearer program, including general academic assessment; involving students more in activities like laboratory work, mandatory orientation programs, peer advising, and tutoring; improving articulation with both high schools and four-year institutions; and differentiating between curriculum content and student intent.

The most compelling chapter of the book focuses on the faculty's role in strengthening the collegiate function. "The faculty are the arbiters of the collegiate curriculum," Cohen and Brawer declare. They "structure the conditions of learning" (p. 62). Here, their statistics confirm a definition of the community college faculty that strikes a familiar, but painful chord. The fact that they found a generally older faculty should not impede the improvement of liberal arts programs; although younger faculty tend to show greater concern for students, the involvement of older faculty with the managerial aspects of their work place them in a better position to promote policies that affect student transfer and protect the liberal arts (p. 65). The key question Cohen and Brawer ask is "How professional is a faculty?"

> To summarize ... they are teachers first, members of a teaching profession second .... They use their collective bargaining rights first for self-interest

> and, in successive contract iterations, to expand their power over the curriculum. They tend to be modestly connected with their academic field, and the longer they stay in the colleges, the weaker that connection becomes. They are concerned more with their own and their students' personal development than with the societal implications of their efforts. They deplore their institutions' ungenerous sabbatical leave and travel funds policies, but when offered the choice, they may choose reduced teaching loads over perquisites, even while demanding first refusal of overload classes for extra pay. Above all, they view teaching as a solo performance, guarding unstintingly their right to the closed classroom door [p. 75].

Much of the problem, the authors show, is the fault of the institution. The faculty feel powerless to change the conditions of their work and suffer from "professional loneliness" (p. 71). The colleges provide little support or recognition for publishing or scholarship; further, this breeds suspicion among the faculty itself, which questions why a colleague pursues an activity that offers no reward. Cohen and Brawer cite the 1984 National Institute of Education's *Involvement in Learning*, which calls for a broader definition of scholarship to include research in teaching the liberal arts; peer review and student evaluations as a learning device for faculty members, not as a basis for personnel decisions; and rewards for faculty members who contribute to the literature on college instruction and student development and who prepare new instructional materials and courses (p. 87). The liberal arts in community colleges depend on the quality and commitment of the faculty; the institutions must, therefore pay closer attention to their needs.

In the best liberal tradition, Cohen and Brawer argue that "placing the college in a framework of economic analysis constantly shrinks the proportion of effort that it devotes to higher learning" (p. 189) and that "maintaining the collegiate connection requires intense commitment by local and state leaders. There is no easy path" (p. 168). We who teach and serve in community colleges reached these conclusions long ago. Where *The Collegiate Function of Community Colleges* can be most useful is in providing statistics that support our views; it seems a valuable reference book.

Academic Freedom in a Community College: A Textbook Case of Censorship*

Jim Perry

I am a veteran of two administrative campaigns to deny my academic freedom. Twice in the past eight years, the administration at the college where I teach has tried to place a committee in charge of selecting my textbooks for me. The new policy permits me to be one of the members of that committee, but I am officially prohibited from using the books of my choice unless all the full-time faculty teaching the same course agree to use them, and I am required to make my students pay for, and use, some other book or books instead.

I have protested this effort on the part of the administration to replace my professional judgment with that of a committee. I have asserted that generally accepted standards of academic freedom justify and protect my right to choose which (if any) textbooks I use in my philosophy classes. Seven years ago, my protest succeeded: the administration acknowledged my right to choose my own texts. This time, my protest has been unavailing: there is now an official letter of reprimand in my personnel file and I have to direct my students off-campus to buy the books I have chosen for my classes.

The reason I was given most often for the new policy was that standardized texts are needed in order to "facilitate staffing changes" and increase the average number of students per class. (Administrators call this "productivity."[1]) So far as I have been able to learn, the alleged need to standardize texts is a direct result of a prior administrative decision to schedule more classes than are needed for available faculty, and then, at the end of registration, raise the average class size by canceling the sections with below-average enrollment, trusting that the students enrolled in those canceled sections would transfer to other sections of the same course (rather than leaving school entirely or transferring to different courses offered at the same hour

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as the class just canceled).

By requiring the same text for all sections of the same course on a particular campus, the administration and the board of trustees say they hope to save some students the bother of trading in one text for another after the administration has canceled their classes.

This may seem to be nothing more sinister than a relatively harmless administrative effort to cope with chronic underfunding. But it is not harmless at all; it is dangerous in several ways. While these administrators and trustees may be correct in thinking that text standardization will sometimes save some students a second trip to the bookstore (assuming that students can be persuaded to purchase textbooks before finding out whether an administrator has decided to cancel their classes), there is great harm in trading my academic freedom (and my students' ability to plan their schedules) for the convenience of a few students who want to buy their books early.[2]

Standardizing textbooks to facilitate canceling classes for profit is a bad policy for everyone except administrators. Because of the policy of canceling classes, students do not know until after the semester starts what subjects they will be permitted to study. Because of this policy, faculty do not know until after the semester starts what subjects they will be allowed to teach and when. Because of this policy, students and faculty are forced to begin the term distracted and confused. There should not be a policy compelling, or even allowing, deliberate cancellation of classes that students have planned and paid for, any more that an airline should should have a policy of canceling a flight if too few passengers buy tickets. And since such a policy should not exist, there is no longer any good reason to standardize textbooks in order to make that policy more convenient to implement.

Compulsory standardization of textbooks is harmful in part because textbooks are not as important in some disciplines as in others; they also are not as useful to some teachers as they are to others. Even requiring every teacher to use a textbook is akin to requiring all musicians to use a drum: what about the singer? And requiring all instructors teaching the same course to use the same text is like requiring them to wear the same size clothing: they will look alike, but some of them will be uncomfortable and clumsy. Moreover, in any discipline, even if a textbook is a useful tool, the best book will prove more effective than some compromise that may be everyone's second choice. Finally, for teachers to know that their own considered judgment in text selection can be vetoed by their colleagues, without reason and without responsibility for the effect in the classroom, is dispiriting, if not intimidating.

This suggests another danger posed by compulsory text standardization: the adverse effect on teachers of a requirement that the best available text be avoided and that some compromise text be imposed on every teacher. If quality and responsibility are to be reduced by administrative fiat in this way, the administration will be perceived as unlikely to challenge any steps taken to reduce quality in other ways as well.

Many of my colleagues have already gotten the message and taken full-time jobs off-campus. They have learned to treat their teaching careers as essentially a pointless, though profitable, part-time hobby. They have stopped grading essay exams and turned instead to "multiple-guess" tests. They have stopped requiring attendance and become accustomed to issuing blanket A's and B's. They show a lot of films. They arrive late to class and dismiss class early. They do not participate in college committees and other activities. In short, they have taken the administrative hint and are daily delivering to their students the administration's message of hostility and indifference.

Today's managers seem obsessed with ever-increasing efficiency, and the good manager is one who figures out how to cut the unit cost year after year. One consequence of this is that modern management relies on customer complaints to govern quality control[3]; that is, they "test to destruction" by reducing quality in every way possible until enough customers complain in order to minimize the cost of production and maximize profit. Detroit did this some years ago, calling it "planned obsolescence," and the result was that the federal government had to intervene to protect them against Japanese competition. Customers stopped complaining and took their business out of the country. This same practice resulted in the destruction of the Challenger on January 28, 1986. Testimony during the investigation of the accident showed that the Challenger was launched at 28 degrees Fahrenheit because it had not exploded at when it was launched at 53 degrees; there is a definite and haunting implication in the testimony that if it had not exploded at 28 degrees it would later have been launched at still lower temperatures until it did explode.[4]

In academe, this process of minimizing cost and quality entails shortening semesters, offering generic courses instead of courses with identifiable content, adding more students to each class, adding more part-time and less-qualified instructors (who then, of course, vote in the next series of decisions about texts and curriculum), trading professional journals for popular magazines in the library, extending registration far into the semester, and standardizing mandatory texts. At what point do our students' minds explode?

At what point do we draw the line and say we will sink no lower? We cannot afford to wait until students themselves complain about reductions in academic quality, since they are not yet qualified judges of academic quality. I am sure we cannot afford to wait until administrators complain, since they are themselves the agents and beneficiaries of each reductions.[5] If the faculty does not complain, in other words, no one else will.

At what point should we complain? I think text selection is a good point. I think that the responsibility for choosing texts and other teaching materials belongs with the individual teacher. I think that text selection must be protected by established standards expressed in the AAUP's 1940 Statement of Principles, which defines academic freedom as "the right, identified with the purposes of academic institutions, whereby members of the academic community are protected in the privilege to receive, discover, convey, and to act upon knowledge and ideas."[6]

This means that academic freedom is an instrument for achieving the legitimate and essential goals of higher education, namely, transmitting established knowledge and seeking new knowledge. Academic freedom is antithetical to the view that our students should learn only what a certain committee thinks it is safe for them to know. It is antithetical to the view that schools are primarily for some purpose other than teaching, learning, and research. It is also antithetical to the view (which E. D. Hirsch and others blame on Jean-Jacques Rousseau[7]) that our students should be schooled as little as possible.

Compulsory text standardization reduces the quality of education by making the teacher a passive instrument of current management policy rather than an active, responsible agent of culture and humanity. This is exactly what academic freedom is needed to protect against: the trivialization of the teacher and the resulting decrease in the teacher's responsibility.

Given the purpose of higher education, which is to promote education rather than to minimize or prevent it, rational modern management must defer. Given the purpose of higher education, the authority of the individual teacher to select the texts and other materials to be used in the classroom cannot reasonably be denied merely for administrative convenience. Teaching materials are as varied as teaching styles and are no less integral a part of the teacher's purpose and responsibilities.

The focus should be on integrity. Integrity is not merely an option; it is the essence of education and of effective functioning of any kind. If we (and our students) are to be effective workers, effective citizens, effective people, we

have to have integrity and we, ourselves, have to be responsible for it. This is the most important reason for instructors to choose their own texts. Integrity is a vital part of the truth that we need to be free to teach, and the typical fragmented anthology chosen by a committee, containing something for everyone and not much about anything, does not have it. The teacher is, and ought to be a living example of integrity, an inspiration as well as a conduit for knowledge, and the connection between the teacher and the text should be no less personal, no less organic, no less complete, than the connection between the teacher's life and principles.

Education with integrity explains, rather than merely describing, the facts and possibilities of the human situation. It makes prediction and control, and therefore responsibility possible. Education with integrity makes it possible for man to be, as he ought to be, the self-surpassing animal.

Without integrity the individual is ineffective and the world a random and fearful place. Without integrity, our students will be unable to cope with the problems of adult life in a complex society.

There are those who argue that integrity is a moral virtue and should therefore be taught by organized religion rather than by the schools. I do not agree. I do not think that integrity need be left to organized religion to provide. Typically, organized religion provides nothing more than a conventional and passive integrity, which only works within set boundaries of ritual and tradition, and rejects any learning that might lead beyond those boundaries. Such conventional integrity provides only a part of the transcendent integrity that is possible and necessary for us to become effective human beings. There is admittedly something literally diabolical—the word stems originally not from the Latin *diabolicus*, "devil," but from the Greek *diaballein*, "to throw in two directions at once"—about a lack of integrity, but the best cure is not organized religion. The best cure is an education that gives the student the will and the integrity to be responsible for his or her own education. The best cure is an education with philosophy in it.

This next argument may not apply in every department as well as it does in the humanities generally and in philosophy in particular, but it is nonetheless relevant. As I see it, integrity is the special concern of philosophy, even though it is the foundation of education in general.[8] The history of philosophy is a magnificent story about the human spirit, which repays careful study, but philosophy is not merely a set of isolated facts and dates and problems that can be stated and solved in ten pages of text. Philosophy is not mere lore. Philosophy is not like the multiplication tables, the periodic table of the

elements, or a standard typewriter keyboard. To present philosophy filtered through the eyes of contemporary editors and publishers' legal staffs and marketing directors is to fail in an important way to present philosophy through the eyes of the philosophers themselves. The essence of philosophy, and equally of the human spirit, is integrity. In my judgment, integrity is more easily found in the complete works of history's greatest writers than in isolated excerpts from those works. That is why I choose and use such works as Plato's *Republic*, Descartes' *Meditations*, and Kuhn's *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. These are the works as the authors conceived them and as subsequent generations encountered them.

Let me introduce my concluding remarks with a little story from the world beyond academe. Many years ago, when I was an aspiring aviator, two of my flight instructors told me that when they first tried to learn how to fly, back in the 1920s, no one wanted to teach them. Oh, there were pilots willing to sell them an airplane and fly that airplane for them, but there were few pilots who were willing to teach others how to fly their own planes. Partly (my instructors patiently explained to me) this was because once you learn how to fly, you don't need your instructor any more, and they can't make any money that way, can they? Secondly (and worse yet), when you learn how to fly you become competition for your instructor.

If pilots saw allowing others to learn to fly their own airplanes as such a threat, how much more of a threat will we see allowing others to learn to exercise their own judgment, live their own lives, and choose their own ideologies (and textbooks)? It may be that what we want to do is to reduce the quality of education, *e.g.*, by treating our schools primarily as a job corps.[9] Here in the South, at any rate, we seem to have a long tradition of diminishing the futures of our children as a human sacrifice to furnishing an ignorant and docile work force for our northern industrialist masters.[10] It may be that in order to guarantee this result, now that post-secondary education is widely available, what we must do is to impose on higher education the traditional standards, such as they are, of the primary and secondary schools, by abandoning the principle of academic freedom and standardizing our textbooks, for example.

I hope this is not what is wanted from us. We were hired to make the best difference we could. The need is still there for us to do our best. Since we were hired to do our best, it seems unjust for administrators to try to stop us. Since we were hired to teach integrity in its most general form, it is going to be counter-productive for administrators to diminish our integrity by exercising prior restraint over our choice of textbooks.

Notes

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[1] Among the other purposes for standardizing texts, which may appear as benefits from the administration's point of view, are the following. Standardizing texts and then canceling classes based solely on numbers means that anyone who can count—clerk, coach, or counselor—can "administer" any department, thus reducing the cost of instruction-related administration. Standard texts, being generally larger and thus more expensive, generate higher bookstore profits (college bookstore profits are already a national scandal that has attracted the attention of Congress). Standardized texts, reviewed not only by publishers but also by colleagues, are less likely to contain controversial material. Standard texts facilitate the hiring as teachers of former administrators and other part- and full-time faculty whose skills and interests (and salary demands) are not up to professional standards. Standardized texts facilitate teaching assignments out of field, since "anyone can stay a chapter ahead of any class." Standard texts enhance the appearance that all students in all sections are being presented with the same material, since virtually all anthologies are too large to be covered in today's shorter semesters and by today's ill-prepared students; hence, one instructor assigns one set of essays while another assigns a different set, and no two classes cover the same material.

[2] Many of these same administrators and trustees may not notice the effect of their action on those students (and faculty) whose classes are arbitrarily canceled: their plans are deliberately branded as insignificant, their self-confidence discouraged, and their initiative stifled. In fact, long-range planning is essential to effective human functioning and should be encouraged in higher education. For a chilling analysis of the "cooling out" function of community colleges, see Burton Clark, "The 'Cooling-Out' Function in Higher Education," *American Journal of Sociology*, 1960. See, also, Fred Pincus, "The False Promises of Community Colleges," *Harvard Educational Review*, August 1980; Richard Richardson, Jr., *et al.*, *Literacy in the Open-Access College* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1983); and L. Steven Zwerling, *Second Best: The Crisis of the Community College* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976).

[3] "Executives' Perceptions Concerning the Quality of American Products and Services," a survey conducted in 1986 by the Gallup Organization, Inc., for the American Society for Quality Control.

[4] "Report of the Presidential Commission on the Space Shuttle Challenger Accident," June 6, 1986. See Mr. Lund's statement that the launch was authorized because "we couldn't prove absolutely that the motor wouldn't work" (p. 94).

[5] The benefit is that administrators are able to disburse non-instructional funds at their discretion.

[6] *Faculty Tenure: A Report and Recommendations by the Commission on Academic Tenure in Higher Education*, a joint report by the American Association of University Professors and the Association of American Colleges (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1973), p. 256.

[7] For a recent discussion of Rousseau's philosophy of education, see E. D. Hirsch, *Cultural Literacy* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1987); Carol Blum, *Rousseau and the Republic of Virtue* (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell, 1987); and a review of Blum's book by Roger Kimball in *The New Criterion*, November 1987.

[8] This point can be made in several interesting ways; here are two: first, Robert J. Sternberg suggests that one essential prior condition of critical thinking about problems is the ability and the will to recognize problems. ("Teaching Critical Thinking, Part I: Are We Making Critical Mistakes?" in *Phi Delta Kappan*, November 1985.) Second, Lou Miller, echoing E. D. Hirsch's argument in *Cultural Literacy*, suggests that what students need is not just isolated facts but a comprehensive perspective (or several) to provide meaning for those facts.("The Other Side of Learning," *Thought & Action: The NEA Higher Education Journal*, Spring 1987.) Philosophy should, it seems, be offering a truly comprehensive perspective in order to provide meaning for the very words "comprehensive perspective," a context for the idea of context.

[9] In most counties in America, the public school board is the largest single employer. What every Chamber of Commerce wants, and what every school board provides in abundance, is jobs. In the short run, learning is of secondary importance.

[10] For discussions of the tradition in question, see "Shadows in the Sunbelt, A Report of the MDC Panel on Economic Development" (May 1986), MDC, Inc., P.O. Box 2226, Chapel Hill, NC 27514; "Halfway Home and a Long Way to Go, the Report of the 1986 Commission on the Future of the South" (1986), Southern Growth Policies Board, P.O. Box 12293, Research Triangle Park, NC 27709; "Keys to Florida's Future: Winning in a Competitive World" (February 1987), State Comprehensive Plan Committee; "The Sunrise Report" (1987), the Speaker's Advisory Committee on the Future, 324 Capitol, Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300. A comment in *A Nation at Risk*, a 1983 report by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, is also pertinent: "If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war" (p. 5).

The Community College Scholar/Teacher Revisited

Myrna Goldenberg and F. David Kievitt

The pundits are having a field day. Critics of the university, the high school, and the lower grades are enjoying attention from all sorts of audiences, both academic and popular. The AACJC recently joined the crowd and issued a report on the community college—its purpose and place in our society. This report, *Building Community: A Vision for a New Century*, places the community college squarely in the educational sequence between high school and the four-year college, and it is reminiscent of earlier statements on the role of the comprehensive *community* college. Echoing other recent reports that emphasize and celebrate teaching, which according to the AACJC report is "the hallmark of the community college movement," it recommends that "appropriate recognitions" for excellent teaching be established.[1] In addition, by linking "good teaching" and "active learning" to "intellectual enrichment and cultural understanding," *Building Communities* breaks new ground.[2] So far so good.

The report moves beyond the platitudes and suggests that "community colleges should define the role of the faculty member as classroom researcher—focusing evaluation on instruction and making a clear connection between what the teacher teaches and how students learn."[3] Obviously, re-defining community college teaching to include research is a welcome and valuable change. A more probing reading of the report, however, reveals two limitations: first, the AACJC limits research to pedagogy, and, second, discipline-based scholarly research and the scholar/teacher are addressed vaguely and indirectly, and only in the context of avoiding faculty burnout.[4] We contend that the issue of scholarly research, an activity that is universally respected by

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academics and the academic establishment (of which the AACJC is a part), merits much more attention.

To many of us, research and scholarship are, along with teaching, what attracted us to academic life and teaching in the first place. Indeed, we are committed to the proposition that one cannot be a good teacher unless one is also a scholar/researcher.[5] Good teaching and scholarship are inseparable because enthusiastic, intelligent teaching is more than the transmission of knowledge and skills—no matter how excellent the teacher. Because teaching is, indeed, the hallmark of the community college, this proposition has profound significance. However, many of our colleagues, and an even greater percentage of community college administrators, are suspicious of, if not hostile toward research and scholarship, which they feel are out of place in the community college. Indeed, those of us who teach at two-year institutions and who are faced with heavy teaching loads and many other demands on our time and energy know full well that we will never have the time and facilities for the discipline-based research that we had expected from an academic career. What is disheartening, though, is that many of our colleagues not only do not recognize the importance of research and scholarship to us and to our profession, but they also undervalue or even actively oppose it.[6]

Some allege that the origins of the community college are responsible for the persistent distrust of scholarly research: "Community colleges have evolved from a school district background and still show the genetic imprint of that heritage. They are decidedly more managerial and less discipline driven."[7] We would modify the latter statement by adding the adverb *unfortunately* because an instructor inspired by scholarly research is likely to be an inspired teacher who attracts students to learning and who vitalizes an otherwise tired teaching faculty. Seen from a different perspective, scholarly research may be viewed as the link between our colleagues and ourselves, past and present, and, when it infuses our teaching—as it inevitably must—it links us with the future. Scholarly research challenges our knowledge base—what we assume, what we have been taught, and what we teach. As we reconceptualize the familiar, we find ourselves thinking aloud to colleagues and eventually debating the merits of new critical approaches or recently rediscovered works against traditional interpretations. Like leaven, scholarly discussions transform the discussants, sometimes into hardening formerly "soft" or benign positions, but usually into reconsidering old truths in the light of these new challenges. The connection between such discussions and teaching is obvious.

Our purpose here is not to admonish managerial administrators or to harangue tired teachers. What we would like to do is to examine some of the

commonly voiced objections and attempt to answer them. We categorize these objections into four groups: the anti-intellectual environment, the ivory tower gap, the Ellis Island excuse, and the onerous workload problem.

The Anti-Intellectual Environment

Those of us who arrived at the community college from a traditional graduate program can remember how surprised and disappointed we were to be immersed in a world of fifteen-hour teaching loads (especially for those of us teaching four or five sections of composition) and seemingly never-ending committee work. We found ourselves in an environment that was demanding and unexpectedly anti-intellectual. Perhaps naively, and certainly futilely, we complained about the lack of time for research, reading, and writing. Many of us can remember being told by a sympathetic older colleague that it would be both more prudent and politically wise to keep these thoughts to ourselves, since many of our colleagues would be angered or threatened by them. Moreover, they would automatically assume that our interest in research was in itself evidence that we did not belong at the community college. In other words, to keep our jobs and receive tenure, we were to keep our research interests to ourselves. Little imagining that the scholarly and research interests we loved were the love that dare not speak its name, we came to realize that our interests, aspirations, and even our definitions of *professor* were shared by a relatively small number of colleagues. The result of this attitude is that some of us became cynical and withdrew into ourselves in a kind of interior emigration from the rest of the faculty while others of us risked ridicule and engaged in open discussion on the value of scholarship and research.

In addition, those of us who accept the premise that in order to teach we must be active scholars and researchers often find ourselves isolated within a hierarchy that values student learning while it barely tolerates faculty learning. At some community colleges, the pairing of teaching and research may not only be devalued but the two may also be seen as mutually exclusive. Many community college faculty believe that an interest in research is an infallible sign of being a bad teacher with an even more astonishing, although patently nonsensical corollary: not being interested in research is a sure sign of being a good teacher. These critics condemn research as unnecessary for teaching lower-division undergraduate courses. They are deluded by faculty and administrators who romanticize or glorify the teaching of the same introductory courses year after year. Others explain that faculty interest in research indicates a desire to please peers rather than students and, therefore, that scholar/teachers somehow do not understand the primary goal of teach-

ing. For example, a recent Ph.D. being interviewed for a community college position was told by the chair that no one with such credentials would ever be given a position at his college, since the chair himself, motivated by his desire to devote all his energies to teaching, had never taken a single course beyond the M.A. An instructor denied promotion at another community college was told by a dean not to list any publications on the promotional application because the promotion committee would believe that the cost of these publications was good teaching. Elsewhere, faculty are denied sabbatical leaves on the grounds that the discipline-based research projects they propose do not benefit their colleges directly and therefore do not merit a sabbatical. At colleges like these, faculty who spend a substantial amount of time talking to colleagues about any non-academic topic are subject to less criticism than faculty who spend that same amount of time by themselves in the library or at their word processors. These short-sighted critics suspect scholar/teachers and penalize faculty who might otherwise help renew the professoriate.

How can we answer these anti-intellectual colleagues? They would certainly reject an appeal to the value of scholarship in itself or as an integral part of our professional responsibilities. We must provide practical, reasonable answers. Scholarship is taken for granted in the Ivy League and is expected at most other colleges and universities, and we contend that it is a necessity at the community college as well. Community colleges enroll over half the nation's freshmen, most of whom take their first college-level English courses at these schools. Community college teaching needs to be competent and inspiring, and community college teachers need to be active learners in their fields so that they can integrate recent scholarship into their courses. In other words, good teaching demands intellectual excitement, and, for many of us, our scholarship and research enables us to keep in touch with new developments in our fields and to bring to the familiar texts we teach not only new information but entirely new ways of looking at them. It seems quite obvious that remaining students ourselves is the most important way to avoid the intellectual complacency and smugness that can come from discouraging research. As we continue pursuing our research interests, we learn that even our narrow fields of expertise offer challenges, problems, and questions that we never anticipated. If we, as well as our students, are lifelong learners, we will never be content to reduce the wonder and excitement of learning to a list of conventionally received opinions.

Moreover, since community college faculty teach a limited number of different courses, the intellectual excitement that scholarship provides is perhaps even more necessary for us than for our colleagues at four-year institutions. Those of us, for instance, who keep up with feminist scholarship must look at

all the humanities disciplines from a fresh perspective. We are forced by our reading to question and revise our own values and interpretations and explore familiar texts anew with our students. In this process, we often discover that the "truth" we learned in graduate school may no longer be true and that the traditional scholarship we had learned may not be meeting the intellectual needs of our changing student population. For example, when we read Tillie Olsen's *Yonnondio,* a 1930s work recently republished, we added it to the list of important American novels, Depression-era novels, midwestern novels, and so on. In this way, we simply accommodated the new title by adding it to traditional, comfortable categories. When we then developed priorities for the course reading assignments and revised the syllabus to reflect the place of *Yonnondio* in the course, we made decisions that reveal a re-evaluation of the familiar works, a new arrangement or harmony of the particular works in the field. In deciding what to delete to make room for *Yonnondio,* we needed to rethink the criteria of excellence and of usefulness and to reconcile that decision with traditional interpretations of the canon. Such a process forces faculty to think about their purpose in the classroom, their relationship with their students, and their commitment to their profession. When faculty revise their courses in the light of new insights gained from continued research and scholarship, they reconceptualize their disciplines. The dynamic process of self-renewal that is the result of fairly continuous scholarly research influences both the manner and the matter of teaching.

The Ivory Tower Gap

Some of our colleagues also believe that research and scholarship can create a gap between our students and ourselves, seeing the pursuit of scholarly interests as a retreat into an ivory tower far removed from the give-and-take of the community college classroom. One answer to this objection lies in the willingness of faculty to write. Since all humanities instructors are concerned with good writing and clear expression, they too should be writing. The best way to understand the problems our students face in writing is to write. The process of writing our own papers familiarizes us with the challenges of writing. Attempting to convert a mass of data or a variety of conflicting interpretations into a clear and coherent whole, we are confronted with problems very similar to those our students face in preparing their assigned essays. Indeed, we often discover strategies for meeting these challenges. Our students are fascinated by discovering that we too are writers and that the tasks we assign to them are not merely school exercises but instead resemble writing that we ourselves are doing. Although a scholarly article is different from the type of writing we assign our students, we would argue that, although

writing scholarly articles is a form of technical writing that differs significantly from freshman composition, it follows the same principles of organization, diction, and so on that apply to all writing. Clearly, our own writing provides us with examples and experiences that we can use to explain stylistic conventions to our students. Discussing our own successes and failures as writers also creates a bond between students and faculty; besides, these discussions root the student/faculty exchange in a common and concrete experience. They encourage the cooperative learning so characteristic of community college education at its best by reminding us that we are jointly engaged in the pursuit of knowledge. Sharing that pursuit helps break down the "us and them" mentality that is all too prevalent in undergraduate education.

The Ellis Island Excuse

In many ways, the most extreme objection to scholarly research at the community college is the "Ellis Island of academe" argument.[8] That is, because community colleges, for the most part, offer remedial and introductory courses, some faculty members argue that all faculty need not be involved in traditional scholarship and research since such an endeavor in no way prepares them for dealing with remedial, unselected, or "terminal" students. Besides the racism, classism, and ethnic stereotyping implicit in this objection, this often-repeated statement is offensive because it suggests that our students do not merit knowledgeable teachers. Our experience proves that a healthy proportion of the students who need remediation have been deprived of educational opportunities and blossom in classes that recognize this circumstance. Second, this attitude ignores the many really superior students we meet in the community college. Furthermore, research or scholarship do not make a faculty member any less sensitive in dealing with remedial students; on the contrary, active learners/researchers/scholars usually develop empathy for other active learners. Perhaps, continuing research and scholarship show us the limited nature of our knowledge. Certainly, they make us less ready to equate our own knowledge with the sum total of human experience than are some faculty members who avoid confronting their own perceptions and premises, confrontations that necessarily follow from research and scholarship.

The Onerous Workload Problem

The last objection to research and scholarship made by community college faculty members is the most understandable. Many of our colleagues quite correctly oppose what they see as an addition to the already high demands

made on the time and energy of community college faculty. They argue that faculty members teaching as many courses as most of us do and participating in as many committees as we do cannot be expected to be productive scholars and researchers as well. We agree that anything that even remotely smacks of "publish or perish" is unquestionably unacceptable at the community college, where heavy workloads make the expectation of continuing scholarly productivity absurd. Given the reality of the workload, no responsible person can suggest that community colleges should demand continuing research and scholarly productivity from their faculties. What we are proposing is that faculty members who choose to devote a portion of their time and energies to scholarly activities should not be penalized for doing so or ever be forced to camouflage or hide what they are doing. Instead, faculty should be encouraged to be scholarly and should be rewarded for their scholarship. If, indeed, community colleges value diversity, the increased openness toward and acceptance of faculty members' research and scholarship would significantly contribute to that much-valued diversity.

In light of four or more decades of hiring practices at most community colleges, faculty members who engage in scholarship and research must accept the fact that it is not likely that they will be rewarded or, in many cases, appreciated or respected for the time and energies they devote to these activities; they need to accept the fact that they have pursued and will continue to pursue research for their own satisfaction and pleasure. By emphasizing the very real personal fulfillment that research gives us and contributes to our teaching and to our professional growth, we can perhaps withstand the objections of those who resent or fear our position. Nevertheless, we are asking that scholarship and research in the community college be re-evaluated. Perhaps the new respect that the AACJC has given to the faculty member as a classroom (or pedagogical) researcher will have the unintended effect of promoting the concept of the faculty member as a scholarly researcher. Perhaps, too, the AACJC and community college faculty and administrators will collaboratively re-evaluate their perceptions and create environments and develop systems to encourage and reward scholarship and research.

Notes

[1] American Association of Community and Junior Colleges (AACJC), *Building Communities: A Vision for a New Century* (Washington, D.C.: AACJC, 1988), p. 27.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 8.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 27.

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

[5] In this essay, the terms *scholarship*, *research*, and *scholarly research* are used interchangeably.

[6] See, for example, Linda Ching Sledge, "The Community College Scholar," *Community College Humanities Review*, no. 8 (1987), pp. 61-66; and F. David Kievitt, "Tenure and Promotion Policies in the Two-Year College," *ADE Bulletin*, vol. 83 (Spring 1986), pp. 6-8.

[7] Burton R. Clark, "Planning for Excellence: The Condition of the Professoriate," *Planning for Higher Education*, vol. 16, no. 1 (1987-88), pp. 1-8.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 4

Sigismondo Malatesta and His Templo

Nancy Womack

During the summer of 1917, Ezra Pound published three cantos in *Poetry* magazine. This was the beginning of a long poem that he would work on for the rest of his life. The work, consisting of 120 cantos, has been variously described by its author. As early as 1922, in a letter to Felix Schelling, he referred to it as an attempt at creating "a poem in 100 to 120 cantos."[1] Margaret Dickie relates other comments by Pound. At first, she points out, Pound eschewed the word "epic," preferring simply to call his work a "poem of some length." In a 1927 letter to his father, he discussed the scope of the work, suggested some parallels to Dante's epic, and described its general approach as being "rather like, or unlike subject and response and counter and subject in fugue."[2] In 1938 he wrote in *Guide to Kulchur*, "There is no mystery about the Cantos, they are the tale of the tribe."[3] Six years later, in 1944, he further identified with Dante: "For forty years I have schooled myself, not to write the economic history of the U.S. or any other country, but to write an epic poem which begins 'In the Dark Forest,' crosses the Purgatory of human error, and ends in the light."[4]

Other scholars who have studied Pound's letters indicate that he obviously struggled with his plan for the *Cantos* and that the work developed as he developed as a poet. Since classifying the work seemed to be a difficult task even for the author, it is not surprising that critics have encountered similar problems in dealing with it. Forrest Read calls the *Cantos* "possibly a rash attempt at epic in an age of experiment."[5]

An epic is generally described as a long narrative poem, mythical or historical in nature, recounting the deeds of a hero. If Pound's *Cantos* constitute a modern epic, there are certain parts of this definition that require rethinking, the word "narrative" being the first. The comfortable notion of beginning, middle, and end, presented in strictly chronological order, does not apply to

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the *Cantos*. The polyphony of a fugue or the technique of montage in film-making more adequately describes Pound's method. Perhaps even more significant is the question of the hero. Readers of epics are accustomed to individual heroes or to pairs of heroic types. They are usually larger-than-life males who struggle against the odds on a grand scale. The Poundian hero, on the other hand, wears many faces, is representative of ancient, medieval, Renaissance, and modern times, is of both sexes, and is called by many names: Odysseus, Tiresias, Cid, Kung, Helen, Eleanore, Jefferson, and Adams, to name a few. This paper will focus on one of Pound's heroes, Sigismondo Malatesta, a hero perhaps less familiar than the others mentioned but nevertheless one who may be looked upon as a synthesis of the Poundian hero as a "many minded" person of action and vision and valor. I will also attempt to illustrate that Malatesta's life's work—his unfinished Tempio—is analogous to the *Cantos* themselves.

Four of the cantos (VIII-XI), known as the "Malatesta Cantos," revolve around the exploits and the character of this Italian prince, who lived from 1417-1468. The hereditary lord of Rimini, Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta has been called the prototype of the Renaissance Italian prince—warrior, lover, and patron of the arts. His family history, including stories of political intrigue, adultery, murder, incest, papal favor in one generation followed by disfavor in another, is a long and colorful one. The Malatesta family, with both legitimate and illegitimate branches, had ruled Rimini, south of Ravenna, in the Middle Ages and had become progressively more powerful in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. By the time of Sigismondo's reign, however, the growing power of the papacy—particularly that of his arch enemy, Pope Pius II—had diminished the power of the Malatestas. Following Sigismondo, only one generation of Malatestas would remain in Rimini. Having lost the support of the Venetians, on whom they had become increasingly dependent, the Malatestas were forced to flee the city when Cesare Borgia marched on it in 1500, and they were never able to reclaim it.

While stories about the rise and fall of great families often constitute the stuff of great literary works, it is not this aspect of Sigismondo's life alone that captured Ezra Pound's interest. Sigismondo's efforts as a patron of the arts also attracted Pound. In commissioning the Tempio Malatestiano, Sigismondo in fact supported numerous artists and artisans: the architect Leon Battista Alberti, whom he called upon to redesign the medieval Church of St. Francis, fresco artist Piero della Francesco, sculptors Matteo de Pasti and Agostino di Duccio, as well as stone cutters, stone masons, and other craftsmen. Pound delighted in the situation, as evidenced in the folliwing remark: "Hang it all it is a bloody good period, a town the size of Rimini, with Pier

Francesca, Mino da Fiesole, and Alberti as architect. The pick of the bunch, all working there at one time or another."[6]

In her *Guide to Ezra Pound's Selected Poems*, Christine Froula says that the Tempio registers the complex historical temper of Sigismondo's time. "In the midst of political turmoil, Sigismondo created in Rimini a little 'civilization' to which his Tempio enduringly testifies."[7] Pound himself wrote that Sigismondo's achievement marks a "cultural 'high'... a state of mind, of sensibility, of all roundedness and awareness."[8] These qualities are typical of those Pound emphasizes in other heroes in the *Cantos*. For example, in Canto IX he uses the epithet *Polumetis* (many minded) to describe Sigismondo. Elsewhere, the same epithet is linked to Odysseus. It is not only the higher sensibilities of Sigismondo that intrigued Pound, it is also the active side of his work as condottiere, involving such events as his being hired by the Milanese then turning against them to help the Florentines (Canto IX) or his laying seige to Sienna (Canto X), where he incurred the enmity of the Bishop of Sienna, who later became the pope who would lead to Sigismondo's undoing. At one point Pound wrote, "I suppose one has to 'select.' If I find he [Sigismondo] was TOO bloody quiet and orderly it will ruin the Canto. Which needs a certain boisterousness and disorder to contrast with his constructive work."[9]

Several scholars, including Forrest Read, have noted that Pound's unpublished letters, like the one just quoted, indicate that he originally intended to tell the Malatesta story in a single canto, which was to be Canto IX.[10] Dickie points out that Pound "had written a canto on Malatesta in June or July of 1922, and then in August he wrote: 'Am reading up historic background for Canto IX. Don't know that it will in any way improve the draft of the canto as it stands.'"[11]

Pound continued to research the Malatesta story for at least the next year. Recent articles in *Paideuma* point out the extent of this research, which resulted in the expanded treatment Pound gave to Sigismondo. Writing in the fall of 1981, Daniel Bornstein cities various sources used by Pound, including Charles Yriarte's *Un Condottiere au XVe Siecle*, which contains an appendix filled with many of Sigismondo's letters. Bornstein also notes Pound's use of the *Cronaca universale* written by Broglio di Tartaglia da Lavello, one of Sigismondo's comrades in arms—the best contemporary source on the subject. While Bornstein concludes that Pound "generally seems to have relied on the documents published by Yriarte and others rather than seeking out the originals,"[12] Kimpel and Eaves maintain that Pound's use of little-known and unusual facts indicates far more extensive research of his part.[13]

Whatever the research method or the extent of the research, the resulting cantos represent a new frame of reference for Pound. In addition to establishing techniques and motifs that would recur in later cantos, the Malatesta Cantos represent Pound's first attempt at devoting large blocks of the work to developing a single character. Other heroes are alluded to in the earlier sections, but here we find what Guy Davenport in *Cities on Hills* calls Pound's "first full-length portrait."[14]

Pound begins his "portrait" rather enigmatically with a direct reference to a line from Eliot's "The Wasteland": "These fragments I have shored against my ruins."[15] Pound's poem begins with: "These fragments you have shelved (shored)."[16] Donald Davie emphasizes the significance of the word "fragments" for the first line of the Malatesta Cantos, which present numerous fragments from Sigismondo's life. In the second line of Canto VIII, Pound makes it clear that the "you" refers to Truth and to Calliope, the muse of epic poetry. As they call each other names ("Slut" and "Bitch"), Pound seems to be suggesting that the real meaning of Sigismondo's life lies somewhere between the two. In his effort to get to this meaning, Pound presents the fragments, often letting documents speak for themselves, thus showing how "the language of art—of style and rhetoric—expresses its own historical context."[17] Hugh Kenner explains Pound's technique quite succinctly as follows: "By the time (1923) the Malatesta Cantos were written, their subject had been erased from literate consciousness. Pound nowhere tells the reader who Sigismondo is: his mind lingered in a time when people knew."[18] As others have noted, today only a handful of Renaissance scholars could recount the details of Sigismondo Malatesta's life, but during his year or so of research on the subject Pound came to know not only the Sigismondo who was burned in effigy with a sign over the head ironically labeling him "Sigismondo, King of Traitors,"[19] but also the man who was captured in Sienna with a post bag containing letters about domestic affairs and the building of a temple. Christine Froula sums up the effect of Pound's fragmentary approach to his subject:

> Looking back on the past, this narrator tells Sigismondo's story not as a historian would reconstruct it but as someone who has witnessed and survived that eventful confusion might remember it: in fragments half erased by time, with what was most important, most memorable standing out from the rest. Five centuries later, this broken form is an appropriate image for the only way *we* can know Sigismondo's story.[20]

A brief look at the four cantos will reveal a bit more of what Pound has shown us of this story. Following his introductory hints in Canto VIII, Pound gives a composite view of Sigismondo's entire career. Here we see him as

"lover, humanist, unscrupled tyrant, military genius."[21] In one passage Pound gives us an account of a deal with a negotiator from Florence who offers Sigismondo 50,000 florins, half of which is to pay calvary and foot soldiers, to lead a military campaign. Later in the canto we are told of his shifting loyalties. The image of the man of action is also skillfully juxtaposed with images that show his other side. At one point we hear Sigismondo discussing his master of painting, giving assurances that he means "to make due provision, / So that he can work as he likes, / Or waste time as he likes."[22] As Phillip Furia points out, Pound uses this scene "to establish his hero as a generous patron who understands the artists he has hired."[23] Pound also includes a part of a love poem Sigismondo composed for his mistress Isotta, who was to become the beloved third wife to whom he would dedicate the Tempio. In the poem he praises the beauty of Isotta "who hath not Helen for peer / Yseut nor Batsabe."[24]

Most of Canto IX consists of excerpts from letters written in December of 1454, while Sigismondo was on another of his military ventures. When he was suspected of double dealing, his enemies grabbed his post bag, probably expecting to find evidence of his treason. For the most part, however, the letters deal with the Tempio—problems in reading the architect's design, an account of a slightly shady deal whereby marble was obtained, an order for materials and supplies, and reports on the work of various artists. Juxtaposed with these letters is correspondence from his family—a letter from his son's tutor, a thank-you note from his son Sallustio for a pony his father had given him, a note dictated by Isotta. After presenting excerpts from eight of Sigismondo's letters, Pound concludes the canto with these lines:

> That's what they found in the post-bag
> And some more of it to the effect that he "lived and ruled"
> . . . . . .
> "and built a temple full of pagan works"
> i.e. Sigismund
> and in the style "Past ruin'd Latium"[25]

Canto X relates more of Sigismondo's ventures as a condottiere and focuses primarily on his failures, particularly in Sienna, and on Pope Pius II's opposition to him. In this canto, Pound draws from Pius II's *Commentaries* as reprinted in Yriarte, in which Sigismondo is accused by Pius II's agent as being a "lustful indulger in incest, perfidious, filthpot and glutton, assassin, greedy, grabbing, arrogant, untrustworthy, sodomite, wife-killer."[26] This canto also includes the details of Sigismondo's being burned in effigy, "Hated of God and man, condemned to the flames by vote of the holy senate."[27]

The decline of Sigismondo's fortunes accelerates in Canto XI. After a venture in Morea "where they sent him to do in the Mo'ammends, / with 5,000 against 25,000, / and he nearly died out in Sparta,"[28] he returned in defeat. His company was eventually reduced to sixty-four soldiers with a salary of 8,000 florins a year. Yet his spirit remained undaunted. As Guy Davenport notes, "The last detail of the broad and vivid picture is 'a green cloak with silver brocade,' a gift from Sigismondo to a friend."[29]

These few details present no more than a broad outline of the Malatesta Cantos. If we consider the hundreds of fragments Pound presents, however, we find the essence of Sigismondo. Donald Davie summarizes that essence as follows:

> The fragments that Pound has shored against his ruins turn out to be snarled imprecations, a hubbub of charge and countercharge, the truth inextricably tangled, all wasteful, all remote. All Malatesta's military exploits were wasted, pointless, a hand-to-mouth snatching at eleventh-hour expedients. Yet out of this ignoble maneuvering we hear Malatesta writing to Florence for a painter, meeting the philosopher Gemistus Plethо, getting stone from Verona for the building he projected in Rimini, receiving illiterate letters from his builder about the plans of his architect, Alberti. The only thing that justifies Malatesta's warfare and his shabby diplomacy is the work of art that is coming out of it, the Tempio.[30]

To call Sigismondo a patron of the arts, though accurate, is inadequate. The Tempio is Sigismondo's emblem. "Sigismondo's Tempio expresses Sigismondo," as Adrian Stokes says. "There he is projected directly into stone, not as a succession or a story, but as something immediate."[31] The Tempio, according to Stokes, expresses not Alberti's personality nor that of the other artists but Sigismondo's. This seems to be one of the primary points Pound wants to make about the subject of his poem.

There are many plausible reasons for Pound to have chosen Sigismondo Malatesta for his first fully developed hero in the *Cantos*. Bornstein suggests that "there was a bond of personal sympathy: Pound appreciated Sigismondo's character and identified with him in his creative task."[32] Kearns draws a parallel between Sigismondo and the *Cantos:* "If Sigismondo is a hero, he is far from exemplary in every way; he is a man of his time in whom order and disorder contend, as they do on every page of the *Cantos*."[33] The aspects of "wholeness" or "roundness" exemplified in Sigismondo also seem to appeal to Pound. Whatever the reason for his choice, the extended treatment he gives Sigismondo presents the reader with a composite picture—a

synthesis—of the multi-faceted Poundian hero who appears in various guises throughout the *Cantos*.

If Sigismondo represents the idea of the hero in the *Cantos*, his Tempio can be thought of as an analogue to the *Cantos* themselves. In recording his "tale of the tribe" Pound encompasses elements from all times and adds layer on top of cultural layer as he moves from one reference to the next. Sigismondo's Tempio is a miniature version of the same process. On this subject Phillip Furia notes:

> The many layers of this stone palimpsest wind as far back into the classical past as Divus' *Odyssey*. On its site there had been a temple for the worship of Venus which, during Christian times, was converted to a chapel for the Virgin called "Santa Maria in Trivio." Later, this chapel was rebuilt as the Gothic Church of San Francesco, and, since it contained the tombs of his ancestors, Sigismondo did not want the old church to be destroyed. Instead, he had his architect Alberti superimpose the Tempio's facade over the old Gothic shell.[34]

The Byzantine influence is also added to this cultural layering in the marble taken from the basilica of the Church of St. Apollinare in Classe, Ravenna, the most important Byzantine church in Italy. That the Tempio is dedicated to Isotta is another element that adds to the cultural layering, according to Furia. Isotta is compared to "other beautiful women like Helen, Eleanore, and Cunizza, who inspire men to create, translate, and transmit beauty. Like them, Isotta is a metamorphosis of Aphrodite, whose temple once stood on the site of the Tempio."[35]

Just as the *Cantos* were left unfinished at Pound's death in 1972, the Tempio was left unfinished when Sigismondo died more than 500 years earlier. In his *Guide to Kulchur* Pound says, "If the Tempio is a jumble and a junk shop, it nevertheless registers a concept. There is no other man's effort equally registered."[36]

Some critics have applied the "jumble and junk shop" epithet to the *Cantos*. Kearns states that forty years after making the statement about the Tempio, "Pound's own career, having moved against the current of power, would come to resemble that of his fifteenth century condottiere; his own life's work would appear to him a jumble and a junk shop, 'a tangle of words unfinished.'"[37] On the other hand, if we are to make the analogy complete, we must look at the other side and recall that final image of Sigismondo as the undaunted spirit. It corresponds quite effectively to a statement Pound once made about the nature of art:

> Art very possibly ought to be the supreme achievement, the "accomplished"; but there is another satisfactory effect, that of a man hurling himself at an indomitable chaos, and yanking and hauling as much of it as possible into some sort of order (or beauty), aware of it both as chaos and potential.[20]

This statement was written about the work of William Carlos Williams, but it applies equally well to Sigismondo's and his own. Is it not art after all that all this is about? Pound invariably chose for his heroes people such as Sigismondo, who struggled, preserved, destroyed, and created. Through his art, he showed us theirs.

Notes

[1] Ezra Pound, as quoted in Forrest Read, *'76: One World and the Cantos of Ezra Pound* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), p. 123.

[2] Pound, as quoted in Margaret Dickie, *On the Modernist Long Poem* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1986), p. 107.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] Read, *The Cantos of Ezra Pound*, p. 436.

[6] Pound, as quoted in George Kearns, *Guide to Ezra Pound's Selected Cantos* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1980), p. 44.

[7] Christine Froula, *Guide to Ezra Pound's Selected Poems* (New York: New Directions, 1983), p. 141.

[8] Pound, as quoted in *ibid.*

[9] Pound, as quoted in Kearns, *Guide*, p. 44.

[10] Read, *The Cantos of Ezra Pound*, p. 123.

[11] Dickie, *On the Modernist Long Poem*, p. 116.

[12] Daniel Bornstein, "The Poet as Historian: Researching the Malatesta Cantos," *Paideuma*, vol. 10, no. 2 (Fall 1981), p. 284.

[13] Ben D. Kimple and T. C. Duncan Eaves, "Pound's Research for the Malatesta Cantos," *Paideuma*, vol. 11, no. 3 (Winter 1982), p. 406–19.

[14] Guy Davenport, *Cities on Hills: A Study of I–XXX of Ezra Pound's Cantos* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigin Press, 1983), p. 157.

[16] T. S. Eliot, *Selected Poems* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1964), p. 67.

[18] Pound, *The Cantos (1-95)* (New York: New Directions, 1956), p. 28.

[17] Froula, *Guide*, p. 142.

[18] Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1971), pp. 77-78.

[19] Carroll F. Terrell, *A Companion to the Cantos of Ezra Pound*, vol. 1 (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1980), p. 53.

[20] Froula, *Guide*, p. 142.

[21] Davenport, *Cities on Hills*, p. 158.

[22] Pound, *Cantos*, p. 29.

[23] Phillip Furia, *Pound's Cantos Declassified* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1984), p. 16.

[24] Pound, *Cantos*, p. 30.

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 41.

[26] Trans. by Terrell, in *Companion*, p. 53.

[27] Terrell, *Companion*, p. 52.

[28] Pound, *Cantos*, p. 50.

[29] Davenport, *Cities on Hills*, p. 158.

[30] Donald Davie, *Ezra Pound: Poet as Sculptor* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 126.

[31] Adrian Stokes, as quoted in Davie, *Ezra Pound*, p. 130.

[32] Bornstein, "The Poet as Historian," p. 291.

[33] Kearns, *Guide*, p. 43.

[34] Furia, *Pound's Cantos*, p. 22.

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 23.

[36] Pound, as quoted in Kearns, *Guide*, p. 45.

[37] Kearns, *Guide*, p. 45.

[38] Pound, as quoted in Read, *The Cantos of Ezra Pound*, p. 437.

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